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ABSTRACT

There are eight volumes in this series on the Holocaust. Volumes 1-6 recount the history of the Jewish people in various year groupings: (1) "Ancient 1935"; (2) "September 1935 to December 1938"; (3) "January 1939 to December 1941"; (4) "January 1942 to June 1943"; (5) "July 1943 to April 1945"; (6) "May 1945 and After." Volumes 7 and 8 provide resources for further study: (7) " A Collection of Primary Sources"; (8) "A Comprehensive Listing of Media for Further Study." The volumes are designed and written to educate the juvenile reader. They contain chronologies, glossaries, source notes, a list of references for further reading, a bibliography to support the historical narrative, and numerous photographs. This brief book is sixth in this series on the Holocaust as it is recounted year by year. The reading level is intended for the juvenile reader. This volume six discusses the fate of those Jews who survived annihilation by the Nazis, their further persecution, search for a homeland in Palestine, and hunt for Nazi war criminals. The book also examines other cases of genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda and elsewhere. Its introduction is entitled Collapse of the Third Reich and tells of the fall of the Nazi regime and attempts to cover up concentration camp atrocities in the final days of the war.. Chapters are presented chronologically and are entitled: (1) "May 1945 -- Staring"; (2) "June-November 1945 -- What Will Become of Us?"; (3) "November 1945-October 1946 -- Crimes Against Humanity"; (4) "To July 1949 -- I'm Jewish. I Have a State!"; (5) "Postwar to Today -- No Right to Die in Peace"; (6) "Postwar to Today -- Illusions Shaped One's Hopes"; and (7) "1915 to Today -- Hatred Can Be Nurtured Anywhere." A chronology of the Holocaust from 1933-1945 is presented. (EH)

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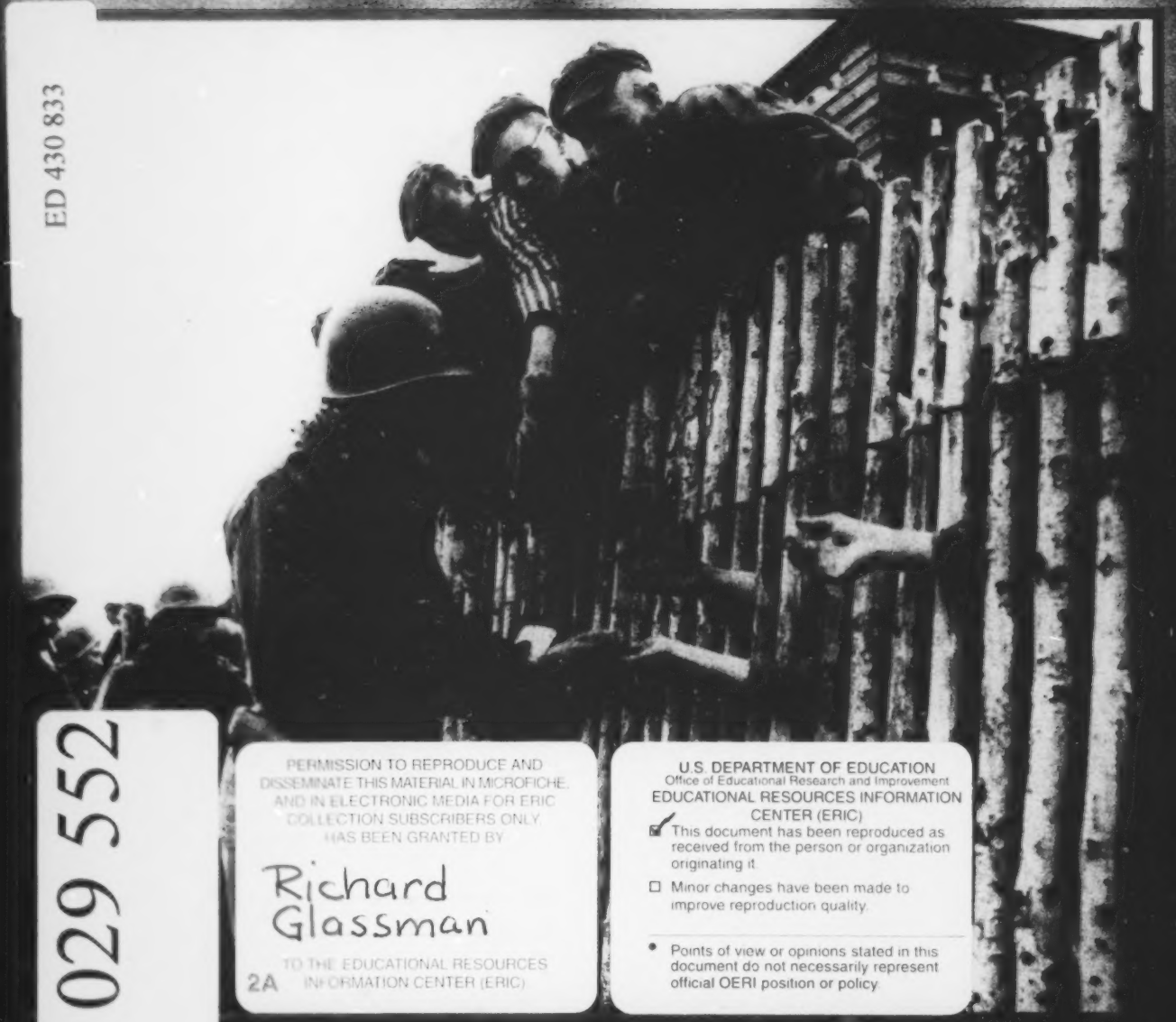

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FROM THE ASHES

May 1945 and After

Eleanor H. Ayer and Stephen D. Chicoine

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From the Ashes

MAY 1945 AND AFTER

By
Eleanor H. Ayer and Stephen D. Chicoine

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Dr. William L. Shulman, President of the Association of Holocaust Organizations and Director of the Holocaust Resource Center & Archives at Queensborough Community College, merits special mention. As the series academic editor—as well as the compiler of Books 7 and 8—Dr. Shulman's guidance, insight, and dedication went far beyond the call of duty. His deep and thorough knowledge of the subject gave us all the critical perspective we needed to make this series a reality.

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Cover: An American soldier offers cigarettes to eager prisoners at Allach—a sub-camp of Dachau—after liberation (National Archives, courtesy USHMM Photo Archives).

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Preface

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., a poignant documentary explores antisemitism and its role in the Holocaust. The film ends with these words:

THIS IS WHERE PREJUDICE CAN LEAD.

That somber warning has guided our work on this series.

The task of creating a series of books on the Holocaust seemed, at first, straightforward enough: We would develop an in-depth account of one of the most complex and compelling periods in human history.

But it quickly became clear to us that, on an emotional level, this series would not be straightforward at all. Indeed, the more work we did, the more we realized just how this subject wraps itself around everyone it touches. As we discussed content with our authors and advisors and began to select photographs and other documents for reproduction, several unanticipated and complicated issues arose.

The first major issue was pivotal, in that our decision would guide the content of the books: How should we choose to define the very term *Holocaust*? Many scholars of the Holocaust believe that the term should be used exclusively in reference to the approximately 6 million European Jews who were murdered by Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. This is because no other group was singled out so systematically and relentlessly for genocide. Should the perhaps 4 million non-Jewish victims of the period—the Soviet prisoners of war, Romani (Gypsies), Jehovah's Witnesses, German and Austrian male homosexuals, and other groups—be discussed on the same level as the Jews? Ultimately—in philosophical agreement with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum—we decided to focus our discussion primarily on the Jews but also to report the experiences of other victims.

Our second major decision had to do with how to present the material. How explicit should the books be in their written descriptions and photographic records of what was done to the victims? Perhaps never before have the brutalities of war and the consequences of prejudice and hatred been so extensively chronicled; perhaps never so eloquently and, at the same time, in such painful detail.

On this issue, we decided we would chronicle what happened, but try not to shock or horrify. Learning about the Holocaust should be disturbing—but there is a delicate line between informative realism and sensationalism. The most brutal accounts and documentation of the Holocaust can be found in many other sources; we believe that in our series, much of this story will be revealed through the powerful and moving images we have selected.

Yet another difficult issue was raised by our educational advisors: Was the Holocaust truly a singular historical event, uniquely qualified for such detailed study as is provided in this series? That it was an extraordinary period in history, there can be no denial—despite some misguided people's efforts to the contrary. Certainly, never before had an entire nation organized its power and mobilized itself so efficiently for the sole purpose of destroying human life. Yet the Holocaust was not unique in terms of the number of people murdered; nor was it unique in the brutality of the hatred on which it fed.

A subject such as this raises many questions. How could the Holocaust have happened? Could it have been prevented? How can we keep this from happening again? We have done our best to explore the questions we feel are most central. Ultimately, however, the most compelling questions to emerge from learning about the Holocaust are for each individual reader to answer.

Foreword

There is a paradox in the study of the Holocaust: The more distant we are from the Event, the more interest seems to grow. In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, horrific images were played in movie theaters on newsreels, which was how people saw the news in an era before television. Broadcasting on CBS radio, famed newscaster Edward R. Murrow said:

> *Permit me to tell you what you would have seen and heard had you been with me on Thursday. It will not be pleasant listening. If you are at lunch or have no appetite to hear of what Germans have done, now is a good time to turn off your radio, for I propose to tell you of Buchenwald.*

Murrow described the sights and sounds of what he had experienced in the immediate aftermath of liberation, and his audience was appropriately horrified. Action was required, trials were soon held—an accounting for a deed that was beyond human comprehension, a crime beyond a name, that we now call the "Holocaust."

Shortly thereafter, interest waned. Other topics of the era took center stage—the Cold War, the Berlin blockade, the Korean War—and it seemed for a time that the Holocaust would be forgotten. In retrospect, we can surmise that the silence was a necessary response to such catastrophe. Distance was needed before we could look back and muster enough courage to confront an event so terrible.

No one could have imagined that, half a century after the Holocaust, museums such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum would be built and would attract millions of visitors each year. No one, too, would have guessed that films such as *Schindler's List* would be seen by tens of millions of people throughout the world. No one could have foreseen that thousands of books would be published on the subject and courses in schools all over the world would be taught—that interest in this horrible chapter of history would intensify rather than recede with the passage of time.

Why study the Holocaust?

The answer is simple: Because it happened!

An event of such magnitude, a state-sponsored annihilation of an entire people—men, women, and children—must be confronted. Some people have portrayed the Holocaust as an aberration, a world apart from the ordinary world in which we dwell. Even the most eloquent of survivors, Elie Wiesel, calls it the "Kingdom of Night." Yet, to me the Holocaust is not an aberration, but an expression in the extreme of a common thread that runs through our civilization. And thus, not to confront the Event is not to probe the deep darkness that is possible within our world.

Because it happened, we must seek to understand the anguish of the victims—the men, women, and children who faced death and had impossible choices to make, and who could do so little to determine their fate. And we must seek to understand the neutrality and indifference of the bystanders around the world; and what caused the Allies—who were fighting a full-scale world war against the Germans and other Axis powers—to fail to address the "second war," the war against the Jews.

We must also seek to understand the all-too-few non-Jewish heroes of the Holocaust—the men, women, and children who opened their homes and their hearts and provided a haven for the victims; a place to sleep, a crust of bread, a kind word, a hiding place. What makes such goodness possible? Why were they immune to the infection of evil?

We must understand that the Holocaust did not begin with mass killing. Age-old prejudice led to discrimination, discrimination led to persecution, persecution to incarceration, incarceration to annihilation. And mass murder, which culminated with the killing of approximately 6 million Jews, did not begin with the Jews—nor did it encompass only the Jews. The state-sponsored murder of the physically and mentally disabled was a precursor to the Holocaust. It was in that killing process that gas chambers and crematoria were developed and refined, and the staff of the death camps were trained. Romani (commonly but incorrectly referred to as Gypsies) were killed alongside the Jews. Jehovah's Witnesses, German and Austrian male homosexuals, political prisoners and dissidents were also incarcerated in concentration camps, where many were murdered. Gentile and Jewish Poles were subjected to decimation and destruction of their national identity. Though many Jews suffered alone, abandoned and forgotten by the world, they were not the only ones to die.

The study of the Holocaust is not easy. We are often unclear about whose history is being taught: German history, Jewish history, American history, European history. And to understand it, we need to understand more than history. Other disciplines are essential, such as psychology and sociology, political science, philosophy and theology, and, most especially, ethics. When we study the Holocaust, we are forced to face evil, to confront experiences that are horrific and destructive. And even despite the tools of all these disciplines, we still may not understand. Comprehension may elude us.

With the renewed interest in the Holocaust—especially in North America—we have seen that the study of all these deaths is actually in the service of life; the study of evil actually strengthens decency and goodness. For us as free citizens, confronting this European event brings us a new recognition of the principles of constitutional democracy: a belief in equality and equal justice under law; a commitment to pluralism and toleration; a determination to restrain government by checks and balances and by the constitutional protection of "inalienable rights"; and a struggle for human rights as a core value.

The Holocaust shatters the myth of innocence and, at the same time, has implications for the exercise of power. Those who wrestle with its darkness know it can happen again—even in the most advanced, most cultured, most "civilized" of societies. But, if we are faithful to the best of human values, the most sterling of our traditions, then we can have confidence that it "won't happen here." These truths are not self-evident; they are precarious and, therefore, even more precious.

The Holocaust has implications for us as individuals. As we read these books, we can't help but ask ourselves, "What would I have done?" "If I were a Jew, would I have had the courage to resist—spiritually or militarily—and when?" "Would I have had the wisdom and the ability to flee to a place that offered a haven?" "Do I have a friend who would offer me a place of shelter, a piece of bread, a moment of refuge?" "What could I have done to protect my family, to preserve my life?"

We can't offer easy answers because the options were few, the pressures extreme, the conditions unbearable, and the stakes ultimate—life or death.

We may also ask ourselves even more difficult questions: "What prejudices do I have?" "Do I treat all people with full human dignity?" "Am I willing to discriminate against some, to scapegoat others?" "Am I certain—truly certain—that I could not be a killer? That I would not submit

to the pressures of conformity and participate in horrible deeds or, worse yet, embrace a belief that makes me certain—absolutely certain—that I am right and the others are wrong? That my cause is just and the other is an enemy who threatens me, who must be eliminated?" These are questions you will ask as you read these books—ask, but not answer.

Perhaps, in truth, the more intensely you read these books, the less certainty you will have in offering your personal answer. Premature answers are often immature answers. Good questions invite one to struggle with basic values.

The central theme of the story of the Holocaust is not regeneration and rebirth, goodness or resistance, liberation or justice, but, rather, death and destruction, dehumanization and devastation, and above all, loss.

The killers were "civilized" men and women of an advanced culture. They were both ordinary and extraordinary, a true cross-section of the men and women of Germany, its allies, and their collaborators, as well as the best and the brightest. In these volumes, those deeds will be seen, as will the evolution of policy, the expansion of the power of the state, and technological and scientific murders unchecked by moral, social, religious, or political constraints. Whether restricted to the past or a harbinger of the future, the killers demonstrated that systematic mass destruction is possible. Under contemporary conditions, the execution of such a policy would only be easier.

The Holocaust transforms our understanding. It shatters faith—religious faith in God and secular faith in human goodness. Its truth has been told not to provide answers, but to raise questions. To live conscientiously in its aftermath, one must confront the reality of radical evil and its past triumphs. At the same time, we must fight against that evil and its potential triumphs in the future.

The call from the victims—from the world of the dead—is to remember. From the survivors, initial silence has given way to testimony. The burden of memory has been transmitted and thus shared. From scholars, philosophers, poets, and artists—those who were there and those who were not—we hear the urgency of memory, its agony and anguish, its meaning and the absence of meaning. To live in our age, one must face the void.

Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, once said:

In forgetfulness is the root of exile.
In remembrance, the seed of redemption.

His fears of forgetting, we understand all too well.

Whether we can share his hope of remembrance is uncertain.

Still, it is up to us to create that hope.

Michael Berenbaum
Survivors of the Shoah
Visual History Foundation
Los Angeles, California

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Collapse of the Third Reich

By sunrise on May 1, 1945, Berlin was in ruins. The German capital had been under constant Allied air attack for four months, and now it was surrounded by Soviet troops. Its last defenders were a ragtag group of old men and Hitler Youth boys.

At their high point, in November 1942, the Axis powers—led by Germany, Japan, and Italy—had held much of Europe and Asia in their grip. Their eventual defeat by the Allied powers—led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—took six long years (1939–1945). Estimates of the total loss of life over this period range between 35 million and 60 million people, most of them civilians, many of them children.

The slow but sure process of eventual defeat for the Germans began as soon as Soviet troops started their westward advance in 1944. By late in that year, the Soviets were already approaching

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A French woman welcomes liberation and the arrival of American soldiers late in 1944.

German-occupied Poland. It was there, as they entered the death camp at Majdanek, that they would become the first Allies to witness the evidence of unspeakable cruelty before them.

A Tightening Noose

The Soviet advance placed great pressure on Adolf Hitler and the Nazis to erase as much of the evidence of murder in the camps as possible. The tightening noose created by Allied troops, however, did little at first to slow or stop deportations and killings at other extermination (death) and concentration (labor) camps in Europe. In fact, the approaching threat seemed only to accelerate Nazi death campaigns. Aware that their grip was crumbling in late 1943 and early 1944, the Nazis made as many last-chance, desperate efforts as possible to finish the work of their "Final Solution"—their plan to murder the Jews of Europe.

By mid-May 1944, the Americans and British were advancing on the Germans. On June 6, 1944, called D-Day, the Allies landed on European soil and created a "western front" in Europe. This landing, on the beaches of Normandy in northern France, marked a dramatic turning point in the war. From that time on, the Germans were essentially surrounded by Allied forces.

The Americans and British continued their push eastward, liberating France from German occupation, while the Soviets continued their advance westward. By the end of the summer, Soviet troops had liberated most of Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania. In August, Allied troops from the west liberated Paris.

Death March

As the Soviets and other Allies closed in during January 1945, the Nazis continued to worry that liberating troops would find evidence of the atrocities that took place at the camps. At Chelmno, in German-occupied Poland, approximately 10,000 people had been murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators in 1944. Now, prisoners were ordered to tear down buildings and dig up bodies from mass graves in order to burn them—to hide the evidence.

On January 17, as Soviet troops neared Auschwitz–Birkenau, also in German-occupied Poland, a mass evacuation of the tens of thousands of prisoners was ordered by the SS, the Nazi officials. Approximately 65,000 prisoners were sent on a forced march toward camps in western Poland and Germany. Many of them died along the way, due to exhaustion and disease. Some were killed by German soldiers. Of those who had remained at the camps, many were shot by the SS; others died after the evacuation. When the Soviets finally liberated the camp on January 27, they found only 7,000 prisoners—most barely clinging to life. By the end of January, Warsaw, Poland, was occupied by Soviet troops. They occupied Budapest, Hungary, in mid-February.

Victory in Sight

In March 1945, Allied troops penetrated deep into the German heartland and headed steadily toward the capital city of Berlin. On April 4, American troops reached Ohrdruf, a concentration camp in east-central Germany. This was the first camp to be liberated by Americans. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, stunned by the death, sickness, and starvation he saw there, urged world leaders to witness these horrors first-hand. A week later, General George Patton brought his liberating forces to Buchenwald. When the American soldiers arrived, they found nearly 22,000 sick and starving prisoners, barely alive.

As American forces liberated camps in Germany, the Soviets marched on Vienna, Austria, and, soon after, began an all-out attack on Berlin. At the end of the month, U.S. troops entered Dachau and liberated the more than 32,000 remaining prisoners.

Now, facing certain defeat, approximately 1 million German soldiers in Italy surrendered to the Allies. In the days that followed, millions more across Europe did the same.

On April 30, Adolf Hitler committed suicide. Berlin surrendered to Soviet troops on May 2. Less than a week later, the highest-ranking leaders of the German dictator's Third Reich surrendered. World War II was finally over in Europe.

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"Staring"

May 8, 1945, the day that many had begun to believe would never arrive, became known as V-E Day—Victory in Europe Day. While millions of people around the world celebrated the collapse of Adolf Hitler's brutal regime, the liberating troops struggled to understand the carnage they found in the Nazis' death and concentration camps.

The Allies Bear Witness

As the Allies pressed toward Germany near the end of the war, advance American and British military units encountered the Nazi camps. Even the most battle-hardened veterans were shocked by what they found. In addition to piles of dead bodies, there were the camp survivors—slow-moving skeletons with little sign of life remaining.

Two starving inmates await assistance after American troops liberated Lager Nordhausen, a Gestapo-run concentration camp.

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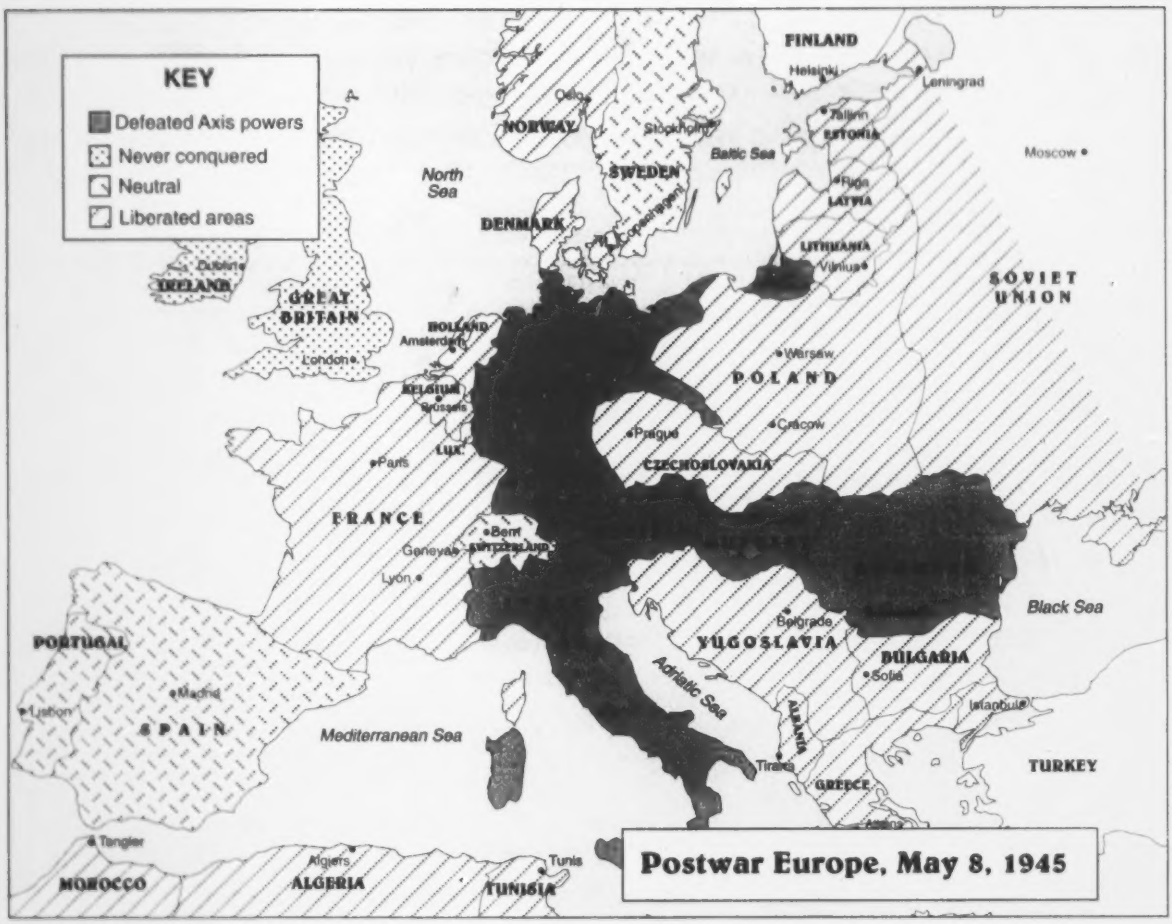

Liberators and liberated stared at each other in disbelief. Clara Greenbaum, a survivor of Bergen-Belsen, recalled:

> *. . . they were just standing there and staring at us. But I couldn't make any sense of that. I wish I could tell you how eerie that was, watching them staring at us. . . . But then I saw one of the soldiers double over and throw up. Soon another was doing the same, and then another. . . . I looked around me and saw myself and the other prisoners for the first time through the eyes of those British soldiers.*

Elsewhere around Europe, the scenes were similar. On May 1, American troops approached Mauthausen and its subcamps in annexed Austria, where perhaps as many as 250,000 Jews,

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Romani (commonly but incorrectly called Gypsies), and political prisoners were held. There, a crematorium had recently been working around the clock to burn the bodies of the dead.

As the Allies neared, the SS began evacuating Mauthausen, sending thousands on grueling marches to the nearby camps of Gunskirchen, Ebensee, and Gusen. Many of the weakened prisoners died en route. At Ebensee, approximately 30,000 prisoners awaiting liberation were ordered to march into a tunnel loaded with explosives. All of them stood firm and refused to go.

When American soldiers at last reached Mauthausen, they discovered approximately 10,000 bodies thrown into a mass grave. Another 5,000 lay about the grounds; soldiers buried them in a Nazi sports field. Among the survivors, 3,000 died within hours after liberation; so sick and weak were they that no amount of help could save them. Others "died from sheer joy," wrote historian Evelyn LeChen. "They had lived on hope, fear, and on their nerves for so long that the sudden relaxation of tension was too much for them."

Earlier, on April 4, the Americans who liberated Ohrdruf-Nord, an outlying camp of the Buchenwald complex, had come upon the bodies of 29 people who had been executed only hours previously. Another 52 corpses were covered with lime to hasten their decay; they were to have been moved to a mass burial pit containing several thousand bodies. Outraged, the American officer in charge of the liberation ordered the mayor of the town and 40 prominent citizens to take a

Survivors at Mauthausen cheer as U.S. forces complete liberation of the camp, May 6, 1945.

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tour of the camp. That night, the mayor and his wife committed suicide. Allied supreme commander Eisenhower was reported to have said, "Well, that's the most encouraging thing I have heard. It may indicate that some of them still have a few sensitivities left."

Liberation, Camp by Camp

As American soldiers approached the Nazi camp at Dachau, they came upon a long train of coal cars, each filled with decaying bodies. The German garrison opened fire on the advancing troops. American Leonard Parker, a 20-year-old platoon leader, recalled the battle that resulted: "We took no German prisoners that day. All that we captured, maybe 350 SS, we killed." He added:

> *Many times when I was lying in a foxhole, or sweating out an artillery barrage, or lying in the rain pinned down by enemy fire, I asked myself, "Why am I here?" After what I saw at Dachau, I had the answer.*

In the days after Germany's surrender, some 19,000 inmates of Theresienstadt, a concentration camp in German-occupied Czechoslovakia—a third of whom were non-Jews—still clung to life. On May 3, the Nazis had given up the camp, which they once described as the "model ghetto," to the International Red Cross. They left behind a scene of rampant death, disease, and starvation. A typhus epidemic had broken out among prisoners who had recently been transferred from other camps. During the next few days, hundreds died from the disease.

On May 11, Theresienstadt was turned over to the Soviet Army. Over the course of its existence, approximately 144,000 people had been deported there—33,000 of them perished.

Joy amid the Tragedy

Every liberation exposed the harsh realities of camp conditions. But some liberations also provided great joy for those prisoners who still had any strength left.

When the gates opened at the Women's Labor Camp in Kratzau, Czechoslovakia, on May 7, Helen Wohlfarth and her fellow inmates were free at last. Wohlfarth walked out weighing 70 pounds and covered with lice—but free. She later recalled that joyful day:

I sat on a stump, enjoying the beautiful sunshine. . . . Under the first large tree I found lilies of the valley in bloom. . . . I threw myself into the field of these dainty little flowers, embracing as many as I could, overwhelmed by their fragrance, which filled me with joy, rebirth, and a new security.

The Bleakness of Survival

May 1945 brought freedom for all those who were still alive, but this freedom would itself pose new dilemmas and create new problems. Where would all these people go? What would they do? They had no homes, and many were left with no family. They had been stripped of their personal belongings as well as their health—things that would be essential in trying to resume a "normal" life. Most important, many survivors had been stripped of their will to live. Years of humiliation, hopelessness, and starvation had worn these people down. They felt hollow, confused, and by no means convinced that they—as survivors—were, in fact, really the fortunate ones.

Upon their arrival at Dachau, American soldiers encountered this pile of clothes, garments that had once belonged to prisoners.

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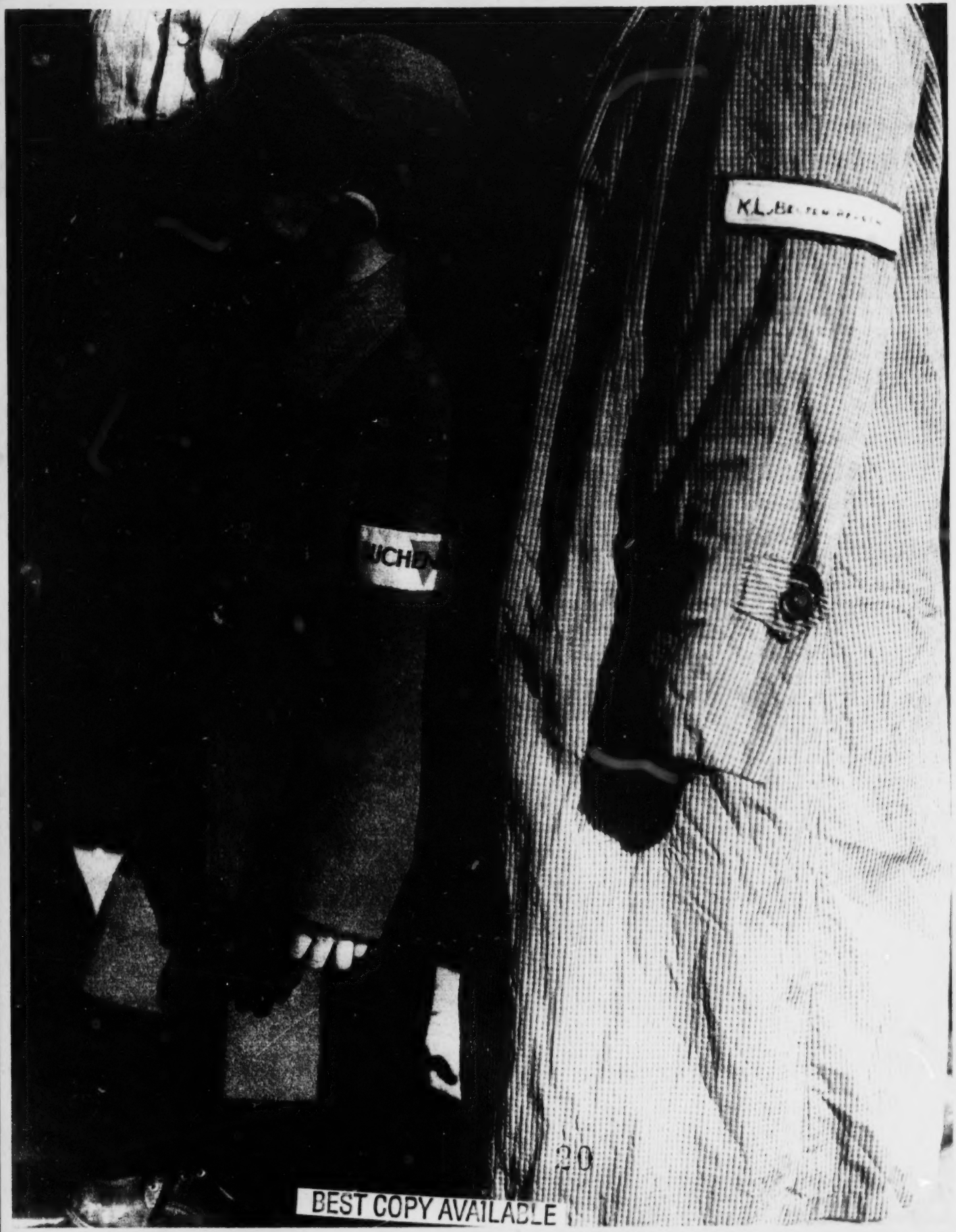

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CHAPTER 2 JUNE–NOVEMBER 1945

"What Will Become of Us?"

Hitler's goal in the Final Solution was to see that not a single Jew survived. He came frighteningly close to realizing his goal. Approximately 6 million of the 11 million Jews living in Europe before World War II were dead by the war's end.

The Jews who somehow managed to survive the war, whether in concentration camps, in hiding, or in exile in the Soviet Union and other countries, now faced a new nightmare. They had to deal with the loss of their friends, families, homes—sometimes entire communities. They were alive, but most were alone, with no place to go. Many were plagued by guilt, feeling that they did not deserve to live when so many others had been killed.

Among those murdered in the Holocaust were 1½ million children. There were also many war orphans—thousands of children who survived, but without their parents. In many parts of war-torn Europe, orphanages were set up to care for these youngsters.

After liberation, a six-year-old orphan in Buchenwald concentration camp waits for his name to be called during a United Nations roll-call.

"Beaten Both Spiritually and Physically"

To help survivors, the Allies set up Displaced Persons (DP) camps, where people could get food, medical care, a place to sleep, and—ideally—news of loved ones. But often, conditions were nearly as bad in the DP camps as they had been in the concentration camps.

Wrote the director of one such DP camp in Germany:

> *The camp is filthy beyond description. Sanitation is . . . unknown. . . . With few exceptions the people . . . appear demoralized beyond hope of rehabilitation. They appear to be beaten both spiritually and physically.*

Unlike the other Allies, the Soviets, who had driven the Nazis out of Poland, did not establish Displaced Persons camps. Instead, they maintained that there was no refugee problem. As a result, nearly 1 million people liberated from the Nazi camps in Poland were left completely on their own to find food and shelter. Weak, downtrodden, and confused, many simply wandered before finally succumbing to death.

Europe in Tatters

Nearly all of Europe had been devastated by the six long years of war. Millions of Europeans desperately needed food and fuel. Medical supplies, too, were scarce. Disease was rampant across the continent.

There were nearly 10 million Displaced Persons when the war ended. No one in the Allied command had ever anticipated that there would be so many DPs in need of help. The Allies faced the formidable problem of not only feeding and clothing these people but also providing shelter for them.

Because of the enormity of the DP problem, Holocaust survivors were not immediately offered special care. In the meantime, malnutrition and infectious diseases continued to take a deadly toll on camp survivors. Conditions for the prisoners at many camps

had deteriorated dramatically near the end of the war. Of the prisoners liberated at Bergen-Belsen in April 1945, tens of thousands had died by June.

In addition to the acute physical needs of survivors, there were also serious psychological needs that required attention. After liberation, some survivors were confined within the same fences that had previously been patrolled by Nazis. With clothes in short supply, many still wore their concentration camp–issue striped uniforms; others could find no clothing other than German SS uniforms—the very items that had once clothed their oppressors. In many cases, Jewish camp survivors were even confined in the same quarters with former camp guards and Nazi collaborators.

"The Civilized World Owes It..."

In 1945, the U.S. State Department, under pressure from the American public, sent Earl Harrison, a former U.S. immigration commissioner, to Europe. It was his responsibility to report firsthand on the conditions in the refugee camps in the American sector of occupied Germany.

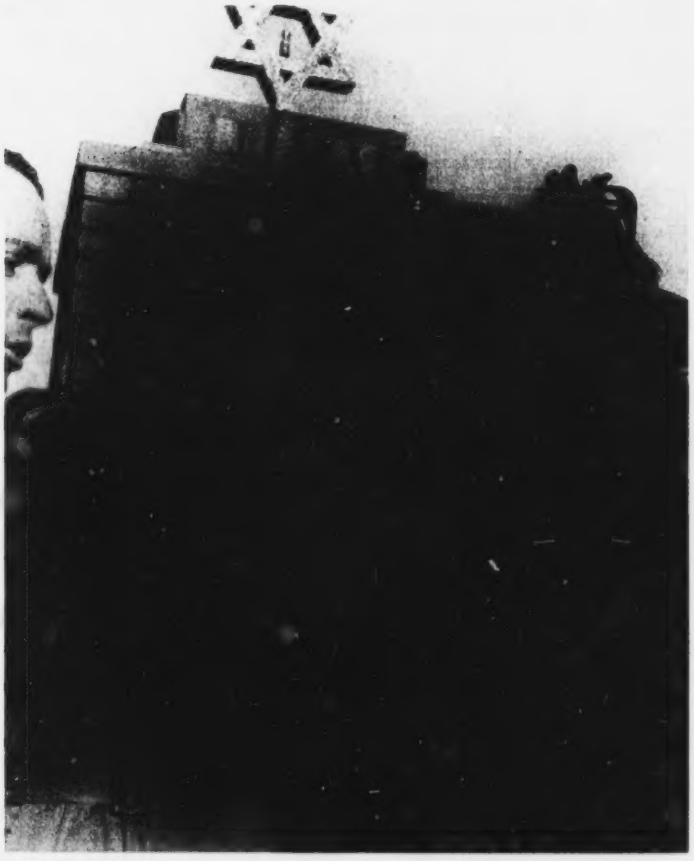
Harrison confirmed what had already been told in various newspaper accounts. He wrote in his report to U.S. president Harry Truman: "...they are in need of attention and help. Up to this point, they have been 'liberated' more in a military sense than actually." Harrison delivered harsh criticism, writing: "As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them." He then summarized various avenues that he felt would improve the situation:

> *In conclusion, I wish to repeat that the main solution, in many ways the only real solution, of the problem lies in the quick evacuation of all nonrepatriable [stateless] Jews in Germany and Austria, who wish it, to Palestine. In order to be effective, this plan must not be long delayed . . . . [T]he civilized world owes it to this handful of survivors.*

Upon receiving the report, Truman immediately issued a series of orders to address the situation. In Europe, General Eisenhower himself oversaw their implementation. To begin, U.S. military officials relieved Germans of their positions administering certain camps. They also relieved the overcrowding, improved unsanitary conditions, and increased daily food rations. A tracing bureau was created to assist survivors in locating family members who might have survived, but this was largely ineffective.

By the fall of 1945, thanks largely to Harrison's report and Truman's response, life for Jewish survivors in the DP camps had improved somewhat. Plans were also under way to establish camps specifically for Jewish survivors. But still no progress had been made in finding the Jews a permanent home.

Eleanor Roosevelt visits a DP camp in Zeilsheim, Germany, circa 1945.



By September 1945, the Allies had returned approximately 7 million DPs to their homelands. Just under 2 million remained in Germany.

Hatred at Home

Antisemitism had not ended in Europe simply because the armies of Nazi Germany had been defeated. Numerous pogroms—organized mob violence—against Jews still took place across Poland between September and December 1945.

In the Polish town of Piekuszow, a mob pulled a 70-year-old Jewish woman from a train and stoned her to death. Six other Jews also lost

their lives there. Several hundred Polish Jews who had managed to live through years of the Holocaust were murdered in similar incidents immediately following the war. But Jews continued to return to their homes in Poland. Where else could they go?

An estimated 175,000 Jews—a small fraction of the more than 3.3 million Jews who had lived in Poland before the war—had taken refuge in the Soviet Union during the war. Early in 1946, they returned home. In the Polish town of Kielce, 150 Jews returned with the hope of re-establishing their community. Within months, however, it became clear that coming home would not be easy. In July, a mob of townspeople attacked the returned Jews, killing 41 and wounding 50 more.

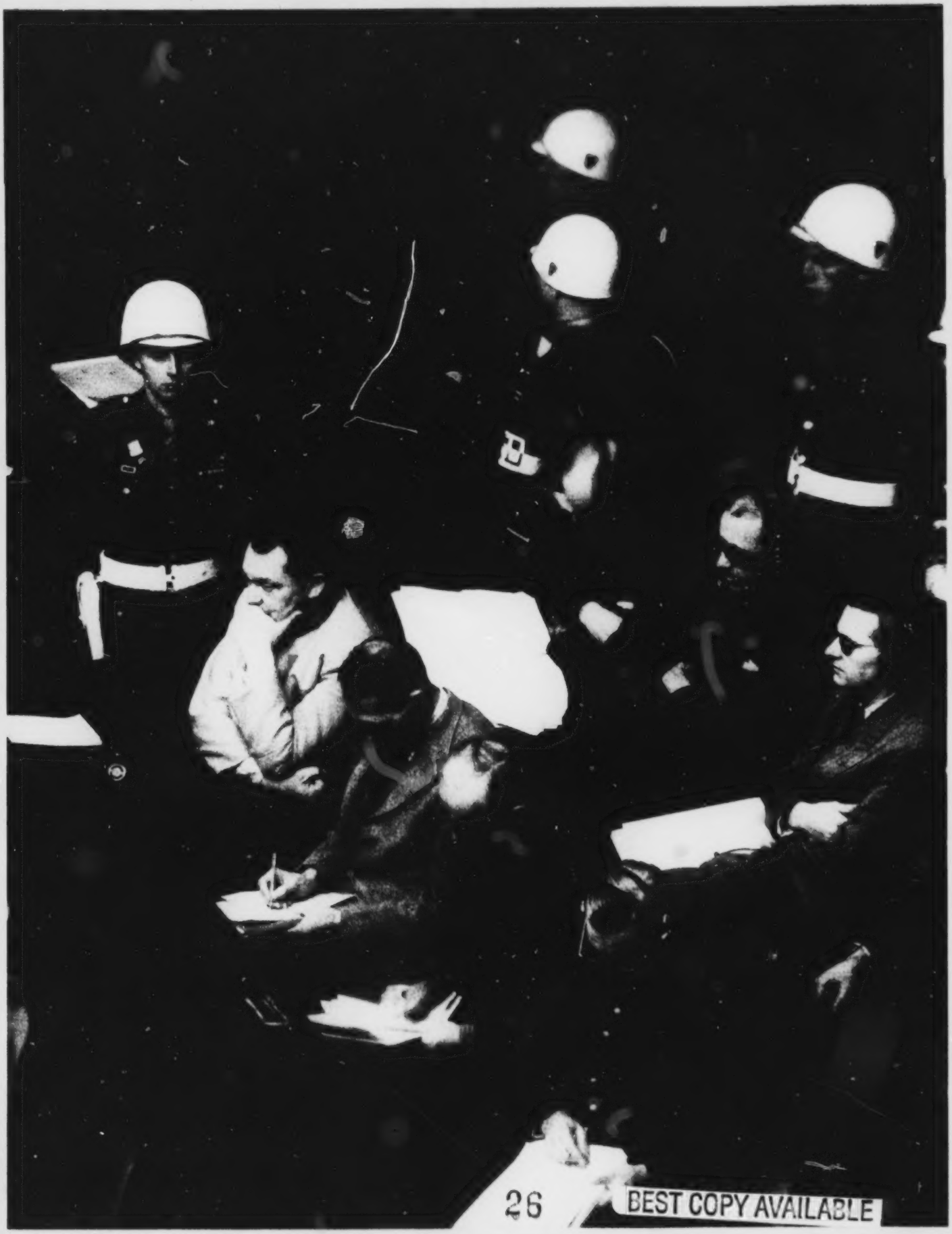
When word of this attack spread, Jews once again began fleeing Poland. More than 100,000 sought refuge in the British and American sectors of occupied Germany. By 1947, the number of Jews in DP camps there was well over 200,000.

To Where?

In his report to the State Department, Harrison had urged the United States to help get the Jews out of Germany. But neither the British nor the Americans were willing to raise their immigration quotas to allow more Jewish refugees into their countries.

President Truman urged the British government to allow Jewish DPs into Palestine, a land in the Middle East under British control. But the situation there was complex. The British, fearful of repercussions from Palestinian Arabs, were restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine.

As late as 1947, two years after the end of the war, the Jewish refugee problem remained unsolved. More than 200,000 European Jews were still in need of a home—or a homeland. At that point, Jewish refugees comprised nearly one-quarter of the remaining DP population. Many dreamed of going to Palestine. Others desperately wanted to begin a new life in the United States. Most would have been happy just to leave Europe forever. The situation remained unresolved into 1948.



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CHAPTER 3 NOVEMBER 1945 – OCTOBER 1946

"Crimes Against Humanity"

Beginning in November 1945, the victorious Allies brought 21 Nazi leaders to the city of Nuremberg, Germany, to stand trial at an International Military Tribunal. The tribunal was "international" because it declared that the crimes of the Nazi leadership transcended national boundaries—that they were "crimes against humanity." The tribunal was "military" to allow more flexibility in the courtroom as well as swift punishment—including execution—of those found guilty.

There was a certain justice in choosing Nuremberg for the site of the trials. It had been at Nuremberg in September 1935 that the Nazis first proclaimed the sweeping laws that deprived German Jews of their legal status. The city was also an important center of the Nazi movement.

Some of Germany's highest-ranking Nazis were tried at Nuremberg. Shown here in the front row, from left to right, are Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Wilhelm Keitel.

The Palace of Justice was one of the few buildings in Nuremberg to survive the intense Allied bombing raids late in the war. It was in this building that the Allies conducted their International Military Tribunal.

Call to Justice

Allied investigators had compiled charges and gathered evidence throughout the war in preparation for a trial. But most important to the tribunal were the vast amounts of documents and records that had been captured from the Nazis at the end of the war.

The Soviets and British were anxious for revenge and saw no practical reason for holding an official tribunal. Winston Churchill, Great Britain's prime minister, was particularly outspoken, saying that Nazi leaders "should be shot as soon as they were caught and their identity established. . . . " Franklin D. Roosevelt, the U.S. president until his death in April 1945, wanted to take a more measured approach. He was concerned that outright execution of the war criminals without trial might make martyrs of the Nazis. His wishes prevailed, though he did not live to see them fulfilled.

On August 8, 1945, the Allied powers agreed to form the tribunal that would try the Nazi leadership. They also decided that the four judges (those who would decide on the case) and the prosecutors (those who would present the evidence) would all be from the Allied side.

The Counts

Nuremberg prosecutors charged the defendants on four counts. One count covered the crime of initiating and waging a war of aggression in violation of international treaties. Germany had done this by disregarding the terms of the Treaty of Versailles set down in 1919. A second count charged violations of the international laws concerning the conduct of war. This included Nazi atrocities committed against Allied soldiers taken prisoner during the war (especially Soviet prisoners of war). A third count dealt with crimes against humanity, specifically addressing the mass

deportations of millions of people and the implementation of genocide. A fourth count addressed the conspiracy by Nazi leaders to commit the crimes of the first three counts.

Two of the counts had not previously been considered crimes under international law. These concerned the waging of war of aggression and crimes against humanity—the murder and enslavement of civilians and prisoners as well as the persecution of particular groups. The Allied tribunal, however, felt that these Nazi actions had to be addressed.

By the opening day at Nuremberg, November 20, 1945, the prosecution and all the attending members of the Allied powers were ready to get the process of retribution under way. Airey Neave, a young British officer, wrote:

> *It seemed that the indictment would never end. The agitated tones of the Americans, the formal British, the bitter French and the bloodthirsty Soviets, stayed in my ears. I could not sleep that night for thinking of a myriad of corpses.*

The Defendants

Twenty-one defendants were led into the heavily guarded courtroom of the Palace of Justice on November 20, 1945. Another defendant, Martin Bormann, was never found but was also tried *in absentia*—in his absence. The Allies charged 13 of the 22 defendants with all four counts.

Several observers at the trials noted that the undistinguished-looking defendants, seated in their cheap suits, did not look like the powerful men who had once controlled much of Europe. Most prominent among the defendants was Hitler's previously designated successor, Hermann Göring, who had been commander of the *Luftwaffe* (the German Air Force). Rudolf Hess, once second in the line of succession after Göring, was also in attendance. There was Alfred Rosenberg, who was responsible for much of the Nazi Party's official doctrine and the man who became Hitler's minister for occupied Eastern Europe. Joachim

von Ribbentrop, Hitler's foreign minister, and Ernst Kaltenbrunner, a high-ranking SS officer, were also standing trial. These two men—particularly Kaltenbrunner—were responsible for ordering and overseeing much of the harshest violence of the Nazi regime.

"So Malignant. . . So Devastating"

Justice Robert Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court was the chief prosecutor for the Americans. In his opening remarks, he said:

> *The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored because it cannot survive their being repeated.*

Early in the trial, the Americans provided shocking physical evidence from the Buchenwald concentration camp, which they had liberated. These exhibits included a shrunken head and a large piece of tattooed human skin that had been made into a lampshade. The Americans also showed films that had been taken at Dachau and Buchenwald shortly after the U.S. troops arrived. Images of piles of dead bodies in contorted forms stunned the viewers in the courtroom. The silence was broken only by gasps and muffled crying from the crowd. Airey Neave wrote that, when the lights were turned back on, ". . . the defendants remained seated, as if turned to stone. They were slow to rise when the judges filed out in disgusted silence. . . . "

"It Shook Me to the Depths"

Thousands of captured Nazi documents were admitted as evidence over the course of the trials. There were also many photographs and motion pictures. A total of 94 people were called to the witness stand to testify. The Allied prosecutors called 33 witnesses; the defendants, 61.

Abraham Sutzkever was the first Jewish witness to face the accused, taking the stand on February 26. Before the war,

Photos such as this—which shows human remains in crematoria ovens at Buchenwald—were among the many pieces of physical evidence presented at the Nuremberg Trials.

Sutzkever had been a poet in Lithuania. The Nazis had murdered his wife and child as well as many of his friends. Later, Sutzkever had fought against the Nazi occupation as a resistance fighter.

For a while, Sutzkever considered trying to smuggle a pistol into the courtroom to shoot Hermann Göring. He spent two long sleepless nights before the trial considering his plan, but a friend convinced him otherwise.

At the trial, Sutzkever spoke for 38 minutes. Immediately after testifying, he wrote:

> *The words still glow on my lips, the words I shrieked out before the whole world and the generations to come. It shook me to the depths . . . which is stronger, my grief or my desire for vengeance? I think that stronger than either is the feeling that our People live. . . .*

Göring Speaks

Göring took the witness stand on Wednesday, March 13, 1946. He tried to justify Nazi actions, insisting that Germany had done nothing wrong. He asked how Germany could possibly maintain order without placing Communists in "protective custody"—the "rationale" he offered for the existence of the concentration camps. Göring denied that workers in the camps were enslaved. He insisted that the Germans bombed only military targets in Poland and that the German bombing of the Dutch city of Rotterdam after Holland had surrendered had been a tragic error. The prosecution argued otherwise on all these and other points.

Hermann Göring, who commanded the German Air Force, was one of the most powerful leaders of the Third Reich.

Most other Nazi defendants insisted that they were not responsible, that they had only been following orders. Although this argument sounds simple to reject, it actually posed a complicated set of legal and ethical questions. In all military situations, soldiers are trained to obey superiors, without question or hesitation. Who, then, was truly responsible for the orders that sentenced millions to death? Deciding the extent of personal responsibility in war was one of the most difficult questions for the tribunal to address.

Göring's testimony lasted for 12 hours. After he finished, the tribunal refused to allow any more long-winded speeches by defendants.

The Sentences

The Nuremberg Trials lasted 10 months and included 216 court sessions. The final transcript for the trial came to almost 17,000 pages, bound into 42 volumes. Prosecutor Jackson wrapped up his closing statement with this warning: "If you were to say of these men that they are not guilty, it would be as true to say that there has been no war, there are no slain, there has been no crime."

On September 30, 1946, after a month of deliberation, the judges delivered their verdicts. They rejected the defendants' argument that two of the charges had not been legally recognized as crimes when they were committed. They also rejected the argument that only states (countries), not individuals, could be found guilty of war crimes. Furthermore, the judges refused to accept the defendants' "rationale" of insisting that they had only been following orders.

The tribunal found 19 of the 22 defendants guilty. Only three were cleared of all charges brought against them. Six of the

defendants were found guilty on all four counts. Seven were acquitted of conspiracy but found guilty of the other charges. Four Nazi organizations were also declared criminal.

On the following day, October 1, 1946, the tribunal delivered its sentences. The convicted were brought in, one by one, to stand and hear their punishments. Twelve of the defendants were sentenced to death by hanging. (One of the death sentences was for Martin Bormann, whom the Allies had been unable to locate for the tribunal. It was later determined that he, like Hitler, had died in the final days of the war.) Three men were sentenced to life imprisonment, and four were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 10 to 20 years.

Albert Speer, an architect who became the Nazi minister of armaments and war production, was convicted of using slave labor, mostly supplied from the concentration camps. Speer was the only high-ranking Nazi at Nuremberg to admit guilt. He was sentenced to 20 years in Spandau Prison.

Two weeks later, 10 of the 12 men condemned to die were hanged from the gallows. The highest-ranking Nazi, however, Hermann Göring, managed to die on his own terms: He had obtained a cyanide capsule and committed suicide the night before he was to be executed.

An Example for the Future

Nuremberg was the first international tribunal ever to address war crimes. It was hoped that the Nuremberg trials would set an example by which future crimes against humanity could be judged. The United Nations' General Assembly later adopted a resolution that upheld the principles of international law recognized by the Nuremberg Tribunal. But the United Nations failed to establish a permanent international tribunal to address any future crimes against humanity. The far-reaching significance of this failure would become apparent before the end of the century, as other genocides of terrible magnitude were unleashed across the globe.

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"I'm Jewish. I Have a State!"

Towards the end of 1944, filled with a deep, deep joy, I set foot in the Holy Land. I was aware that I had escaped a catastrophe but only vaguely aware of its extent.

—Ezra Ben-Gershom,
Jewish refugee from Nazi Europe

A People Without a Homeland

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., glass-sided bridges carry visitors from one exhibit area to another. Etched on one set of glass panels are the names of European towns and *shtetls* (Jewish villages) that were attacked or destroyed by the Nazis during World War II. Mokrin, Mol, Mostar...panel after panel is filled with names. Altogether, more than 5,000 communities were entirely erased from the map, or their Jewish populations were decimated.

Three young women DPs take a last look at Buchenwald as they depart by train for Palestine in June 1945.

One museum exhibit, called the Tower of Faces, is a powerful collection of 6,000 photographs. These photos show daily life in the *shtetl* of Eishishok, near the city of Vilnius, Lithuania, where some 3,400 Jews once lived. In just a few days in September 1941, the Nazis executed all but 29 of them. Among the survivors was four-year-old Yaffa Sonenson, who, years later, compiled this exhibit, a moving tribute to those family, friends, and neighbors she once knew.

For the survivors of Eishishok and the 5,000 other Jewish communities that were destroyed, life in Europe after 1945 looked bleak. Family and friends were dead, homes were destroyed, and nearly all traces of the rich Jewish culture that had existed for centuries were gone. Particularly in Eastern Europe, antisemitism continued to rage. This frightening prospect, as well as the grim conditions in the Displaced Persons camps, motivated many Jews to try to emigrate. But emigration was rarely easy or even safe, and often the refugees felt as shunned in their new homes as they had in Europe.

Zionism and the Promised Land

Palestine, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, had been settled from prehistoric times by various groups. The Hebrews—later called the Jews—considered parts of Palestine to be their ancestral homeland. They believed the land was bequeathed to them through an agreement, or covenant, that God made with Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

For nearly 1,500 years, the Jews lived in relative peace. But, in C.E. 70, the Romans captured the holy city of Jerusalem and burned the beautiful temple of Solomon. The Jews began to flee, setting in motion a diaspora, or "dispersion," of the Jewish people. Such dispersions among Jews have recurred and persisted throughout history, explaining the geographic diversity of Jewish populations around the world.

Over the centuries, Jews settled in nearly all other parts of the world. But they still had no central homeland.

By the end of the nineteenth century, growing antisemitism had spawned Zionism, a movement to create a Jewish state. One of the founders of this movement was Theodor Herzl, a Jewish journalist from Vienna, Austria, who had long been committed to that goal.

Herzl's resolve was strengthened in the winter of 1894–1895 by the trial of Alfred Dreyfus. A Jewish officer in the French Army, Dreyfus had been convicted—on false evidence, fueled by anti-semitism—of turning over French military secrets to the Germans. Outside the Paris courtroom following the trial, Herzl heard a crowd shouting, "Death to Dreyfus! Death to Jews!"

The reaction enraged him. He now thought that Jews would never escape persecution as long as they tried to integrate into other countries' cultures. In 1896, he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State"), in which he said:

> *. . . We have everywhere tried honestly to integrate with the national communities surrounding us and to retain only our faith. We are not permitted to do so. . . . In vain do we exert ourselves to increase the glory of our fatherlands by achievements in art and in science and their wealth by our contributions to commerce. . . . [But we] are denounced as strangers.*

The answer, Herzl said, was to form a Jewish state where Jews from around the world could settle. This was not an original idea; it had been proposed at other times. But his drive created a strong following among Jews worldwide. Those who supported Herzl's goal became known as Zionists (the name by which the Hebrew Bible—sometimes, but incorrectly, called the Old Testament—refers to Mount Zion, a hill of ancient Jerusalem).

At the time *Der Judenstaat* was published, Palestine was part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. After World War I, when the empire was dissolved and divided among the Western powers, Great Britain assumed control of Palestine. In the following years, Palestine's Jewish population grew steadily. By 1925,

approximately 108,000 Jews had emigrated there, but Theodor Herzl was not among them. The father of modern political Zionism had died in Austria in 1904, at the age of 44.

The Balfour Declaration

Zionism did not die with Herzl. In 1920, Chaim Weizmann became president of the World Zionist Organization. Three years earlier, Weizmann had scored a major victory in the fight for a Jewish homeland. He had convinced Lord Arthur Balfour, Great Britain's foreign minister, to write a letter to a prominent British banker, Baron Rothschild, expressing support for ". . . the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Balfour agreed to write the letter but was careful to say that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." In other words, he wanted no harm to come to the Arabs who were Palestinian natives.

Balfour's letter, which became known as the "Balfour Declaration," received much attention among Zionists. They regarded this document as a British commitment to their right to a Jewish state in Palestine. Winston Churchill, who was then the British colonial secretary, agreed. When asked how he defined Britain's responsibilities in Palestine, Churchill replied, "To do our best to make an honest effort to give the Jews a chance to make a national home for themselves." Asked if the Jews should have control of the government there, he replied:

> *If in the course of many years they become a majority in the country, they naturally would take it over. . . pro rata [proportionately to] the Arab. We made an equal pledge that we would not turn the Arab off his land or invade his political and social rights.*

Churchill's promise was much easier to say than to do. As Jews continued to emigrate to Palestine, violence broke out with the Arabs, who looked upon Jewish immigration as a threat to their

security. For centuries, the Arabs had suffered under Ottoman rule. Now they feared that a similar fate awaited them under British control, as Jewish refugees poured into the country in increasing numbers.

A Haven from Hitler

With Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased. Between 1933, when Hitler became chancellor, and 1939, when World War II broke out, more than 200,000 emigrants fled to the promised land. By 1940, the more than 400,000 Jews in Palestine made up one-quarter of the country's population.

British prime minister Neville Chamberlain enacted the "White Paper," which severely limited Jewish immigration to Palestine.

The British knew they needed to slow the flood of immigrants to Palestine or the Arabs would become angry. To this end, the British limited to 1,500 the number of Jews who could enter Palestine each month. This quota would be kept for five years, and further immigration would take place only with Arab approval. The plan, enacted by British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, became known as the "White Paper."

Illegal Immigration

Thousands of Jews, fearing that if they did not go at once they might never get to Palestine, made the move illegally. Many of the refugees traveled in crowded, leaky ships with faulty engines that, said one observer, ". . . resembled overloaded nutshells." One of these vessels was the *Scaria,* which reached the port city of Haifa in February 1940. As the *Scaria* neared its destination,

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someone shouted that Palestine could be seen in the distance. All at once, the 2,000 desperate passengers rushed to the same side of the deck, nearly overturning the boat.

Another refugee ship, the *Struma,* carrying 769 passengers, left Romania in February 1942. En route to Palestine, it developed engine trouble and put into port at Istanbul, Turkey, for repairs. The British, knowing where the ship was bound, put pressure on the Turks to turn away the *Struma*. As a result, the ship was forced back into the Black Sea. On February 24, the *Struma* was sunk, probably by the Germans. Only one passenger survived.

The Postwar Wave

At war's end, with the liberation of the concentration camps and the emergence of people from hiding in Europe, emigration to Palestine exploded. Events of World War II seemed only to galvanize the resolve of Jews all over the world—especially those from Europe—to create a permanent homeland. "The First World War," wrote historian Paul Johnson, "made the Zionist state possible. The Second World War made it essential." Those who were caught immigrating illegally were severely punished by the British, but this did not stop their attempts.

Between August 1946 and April 1948, the British stopped more than 50,000 Jews trying to enter Palestine illegally. Many were sent to detention camps on the island of Cyprus, but illegal immigration continued. Shipowners soon became reluctant to charter their boats to refugees who were emigrating illegally. In response, Jewish organizations around the world raised money to purchase surplus war ships for transportation. By the end of 1949, a total of 66 ships had delivered 71,000 illegal immigrants to the "Promised Land."

A Crisis Brews

As one of the victorious Allies, the United States shared in the problem of resettling Europe's displaced Jews. It also needed to confront the growing crisis in Palestine. Some Americans felt

that the Jews had no more claim to Palestine than did the Arabs, who also had lived there for centuries. Others sympathized with the need of the Jewish people to find a place they could call home, particularly given the circumstances of the Holocaust.

The United States was reluctant to get involved in the situation for several reasons. Great Britain was one of America's strongest allies; arguing against British policies in Palestine might well destroy that key political friendship. The American government was also concerned that angering the Arabs might encourage them to align with the Soviet Union, a nation that was becoming increasingly hostile to the United States. In addition, the oil of the region was very important to Americans; it was critical that the oil fields in the Middle East remain open to the United States.

Should the American government risk angering the British and the Arabs by encouraging the settlement of Palestine by Jews? Or should it risk angering the Jews, who were a powerful political force in America, by encouraging limits on Jewish settlement in Palestine? Neither option seemed preferable.

Most Americans seemed to favor the creation of a Jewish homeland. The reason for that, the British cynically suggested, was that Americans would rather see Jews in Palestine than in the United States. While that feeling may have been true among some people, it certainly didn't appear to be the majority sentiment in the United States. Helping the cause for Israel was the intense lobbying effort by American Jews. Their major goal was to convince government officials to support the creation of a Jewish homeland. Most officials listened, because support from Jewish voters was essential to their re-elections.

The United Nations Solution

By 1946, the pressure was strong. Jews continued to emigrate, Arabs continued to protest, and violence continued to increase. The British government now realized that more effective and dramatic action was needed on Palestine. Rather than make the decisions on its own, however, Great Britain turned the matter

over to the United Nations. For nearly a year, a UN committee discussed the situation. At last, in October 1947, it recommended that Palestine be divided into two separate states, one Arab and one Jewish. The Jews, it declared, must settle in areas that were not then inhabited by Arabs. The Holy City of Jerusalem would be open to both groups and would be administered by an international peacekeeping force.

Birth of the Jewish State

One month later, on November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to support the recommendation on the creation of a Jewish state (country). British representatives abstained from voting; Arab delegates walked out of the assembly. The decision was scheduled to take effect the following year, on May 14, when British control of Palestine expired.

Among the Jews, there was great rejoicing at the UN decision. Thousands danced in the streets of Tel Aviv. One of those rejoicing was Rene Gallant, a young girl who had lost both her parents in the Holocaust. She was standing in front of a radio shop when she heard the news:

> *I looked at my reflection in the shop window. Something very special had happened. Somehow, I had grown taller. I turned to the stranger beside me. "Can you tell?" I asked proudly. "Tell what?" "I'm Jewish. I have a state!"*

Not all Jews were content with the outcome, however. On April 9, members of two Jewish extremist groups, the Stern Gang and Irgun, took drastic action that they hoped would drive the Arabs out of Palestine. They attacked the Arab village of Deir Yasin in Palestine and massacred approximately 200 inhabitants. This ambush sparked intense antisemitic reactions from around the world. Most Jews in the region were very upset by the attack. Jewish historian Abram Sachar later wrote, "[The massacre] appalled the civilized world and stained Jewish honor for years ahead."

David Ben-Gurion (left) signs a document proclaiming the new State of Israel, May 1948. Ben-Gurion served as Israel's first prime minister.

The attack at Deir Yasin prompted the flight of hundreds of frightened Palestinian Arabs. But three days later, some of them staged a counterattack. A group of Arab extremists ambushed and murdered a group of 77 Jewish nurses, doctors, teachers, and students on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem.

The two sides continued to clash. By May 13, 1948—the day before British rule of Palestine was set to expire—Jewish military forces had taken control of not only their sector of Palestine but some important positions in the Arab sector as well.

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Exodus 1947

The plight of Holocaust survivors trying to reach Palestine received world attention in July 1947. The scene was Sète, a port in southeastern France, where a battered old American boat awaited its passengers. Agents of the Haganah, the Jewish underground army, had purchased the worn-out Chesapeake Bay excursion boat to transport Jews to Palestine. They renamed it *Exodus from Europe 1947*, in memory of the Exodus, said to be the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt many centuries before. On this trip, the *Exodus* carried 4,554 illegal Jewish refugees from the Displaced Persons camps in Europe.

Determined to stop illegal Jewish immigration, British agents in Palestine pleaded with the French not to allow the *Exodus* to sail. But the French, reluctant to get involved in Great Britain's delicate political problems in Palestine, refused. Thus, ships from the British Navy set sail, chasing the *Exodus* across the Mediterranean Sea toward Palestine.

Early on the morning of July 18, as the refugee ship neared Palestine, two British destroyers purposely rammed its side, and 40 sailors jumped aboard. In the fight that followed, two refugees and a crew member were killed. By that afternoon, the battered ship had reached Haifa, where its passengers and crew were arrested and put onto three British prison ships.

To their despair, *Exodus* passengers now found themselves returning to France. Upon arrival, all but 159 stayed on the ships. For more than a month, the refugees sat in their barbed-wire floating prisons, refusing to set foot in

At midnight on May 14, 1948, when Great Britain's control of Palestine officially ended, the Jewish National Council proclaimed the new State of Israel. David Ben-Gurion, a Polish-born Zionist who had moved to Palestine in 1906 and who had helped to found the state, spoke before a distinguished group at the Tel Aviv Art Museum:

> *Exiled from the Land of Israel, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the centuries of dispersion . . . by virtue of our natural and historic right and of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, I do hereby proclaim the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel—the State of Israel.*

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any land but Palestine. The British, frustrated by the strong will of the Jewish refugees, warned them that, if they did not get off, they would be taken to Germany. Only seven disembarked; the rest sailed in their prison ships for Hamburg, arriving in the early morning hours of September 8, 1947.

In Germany, they were met by 2,500 armed soldiers. Refugees on the first two prison ships disembarked peacefully. But the 1,485 passengers on the third ship refused to move. Finally, they were carried off by the soldiers and taken to two camps, one of them a former Nazi concentration camp. The camps were enclosed by barbed wire and guarded by soldiers armed with guns and searchlights. People around the world were outraged at what seemed to be Britain's Nazi-like treatment of the Jews.

The refugees refused to cooperate with their captors. When asked to give their nationalities, most said, "I am a Jew from Palestine and I want to go back to Palestine." When asked how they became victims of the Nazis in Europe they replied, "I was traveling" (a reference to the Jews' centuries of exile). No one admitted his identity or gave away the identity of another person. All remained stubbornly silent.

In the end, it was the British who gave up first. Tired of guarding these fiercely determined refugees—and perhaps feeling concerned about the morality of what they were doing—British soldiers became lax in their guard duty. Jews began walking away from the camps. By September 1948, all of them were gone.

Victory, but Not Peace

Though the Jews had achieved a major victory in their quest for a homeland, victory did not come with peace. A series of wars and other violent conflicts between Jews and Arabs have continued to this day. Yet, despite the terror and bloodshed, many Jews—both in and out of Israel—feel that their homeland has been worth the fight. Author Lynne Reid Banks recounted a quote from soldier Menachem Roussak in her oral history of the Israeli War of Independence:

> *. . . in the twentieth century the tangibility [real existence] of a people is a state. . . . Whatever problems we have had with the rest of the world since, at least they must all take into account that we have a state and a territory.*

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CHAPTER 5 POSTWAR TO TODAY

"No Right to Die in Peace"

At the end of World War II, several secret organizations formed to help Nazis flee from justice. One of these was ODESSA, an organization that hid and sheltered former SS members. Its activities were financed by the money and valuables the Nazis had stolen from Jews during the war. ODESSA's main purpose was to arrange for false identities and safe passage for Nazis on the run.

Other, less secretive organizations also gave assistance to fleeing Nazis. Austrian and Italian priests headed some of these groups. Senior members of the U.S. State Department—the government agency responsible for foreign affairs—were also involved. In the early postwar period, the American government wanted German scientists and experienced intelligence agents—and it was willing to overlook a person's Nazi past to take advantage of his experience. According to a former director of the U.S. Justice Department,

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Josef Mengele—known among camp prisoners as the "Angel of Death"—was one of many Nazi murderers who was never brought to justice.

nearly 10,000 Nazi war criminals were admitted to the United States as citizens after the war. An official of the Immigration Service reported similar findings.

The Nazi Hunter

The 21 top-ranking Nazis who were captured immediately after the war were judged before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1945–1946. But other architects of the Final Solution, such as Heinrich Müller, head of the Gestapo; Hitler's advisor Martin Bormann; and Alois Brunner, SS deportation expert, remained at large.

Not content with government agencies' often slow efforts to track down these war criminals, several individuals took matters into their own hands. Many devoted their entire lives to finding high-ranking Nazi officials and bringing them to justice.

One of the most famous Nazi hunters was Simon Wiesenthal, born in 1908, in a small town in Galicia, now western Ukraine. Wiesenthal had lost 89 family members in the Holocaust. He himself had spent four-and-a-half years in concentration camps. In 1945, he emerged from the Mauthausen labor camp a skeleton, weighing less than 100 pounds. Wiesenthal then worked with the U.S. Army, helping to track down war criminals in Austria. As part of his work, he accumulated lists of suspected criminals and recorded eyewitness accounts of Nazi atrocities.

In 1947, Wiesenthal set up a small "Documentation Center" in order to help Jews locate missing relatives. In the process, he began building an extensive file of suspected war criminals' names, known or presumed addresses, and witnesses to their crimes. By accumulating extensive evidence against them and writing countless letters to governments urging them to prosecute war criminals, he built a reputation as one of the most relentless and effective Nazi hunters. Over the years, he has helped to locate and bring to trial more than 1,100 suspects. "I do this because I have to do it," Wiesenthal once said. "I am not motivated by a sense of revenge."

One of Wiesenthal's greatest successes was bringing about the capture of Franz Stangl, the former commandant of the Sobibór and Treblinka death camps in Poland, where more than 1 million people were murdered. On December 22, 1970, Stangl was sentenced in Germany to life in prison "for having supervised the murder of at least 900,000 men, women, and children." He died in 1971.

Simon Wiesenthal is one of the world's most successful Nazi hunters.

The Most-Wanted Nazi

One of the highest-ranking Nazis still at large after the war was Adolf Eichmann, an SS lieutenant colonel who had arranged the transportation of millions of Jews to death and concentration camps. In order to demonstrate Eichmann's knowledge of, and participation in, Hitler's "Final Solution," Wiesenthal told of a report from a Nazi meeting in Budapest, Hungary, in 1944. Some of Eichmann's cohorts asked how many Jews had been exterminated thus far. When Eichmann responded "5 million," they asked if he were nervous about what might happen to him when Germany lost the war. Reported Wiesenthal:

> *Eichmann gave a very astute answer that shows he knew how the world worked: "A hundred dead people is a catastrophe," he said. "6 million dead is a statistic."*

Eichmann—who had been caught by the Americans and then let go—fled from Europe with a passport issued by the Vatican under the name Ricardo Klement. For years, Wiesenthal and other Nazi hunters sought in vain for traces of him. Finally, in May 1960, they caught Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina,

and delivered him to Israel. On May 23, Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion publicly announced that Adolf Eichmann had been brought to Jerusalem and would stand trial.

At the trial, the chief prosecutor read the counts against Eichmann, numbering 15. At the end of each, the defendant was asked how he pleaded. Each time, Eichmann responded, "Not guilty." Wrote Wiesenthal later:

> *I thought that Eichmann should have been asked six million times, and he should have been made to answer six million times.*

The Eichmann trial, which was televised to much of the world, lasted from April 11 through December 15, 1961. One hundred witnesses for the prosecution—90 of whom were survivors of the Holocaust—took the stand. Eichmann himself also testified. In the end, he was found guilty on all counts and was sentenced to death by hanging.

The "Angel of Death"

Among the most notorious Nazi war criminals to escape justice was Dr. Josef Mengele, the chief medical officer at Auschwitz–Birkenau. Mengele, who often dressed in a white uniform, had been in charge of the "selection process" for newly arrived prisoners: With a turn of his thumb, either left or right, he decided who would live and who would die. Because of his attractive appearance and powerful position, Mengele became known as the "Angel of Death." Despite decades of effort on the part of Simon Wiesenthal, the U.S. government, and many others, Mengele was never apprehended.

Also involved in the search for Josef Mengele were French residents Serge and Beate Klarsfeld. Serge was a Romanian-born lawyer and Holocaust survivor whose father had been killed at Auschwitz–Birkenau. His wife, Beate, although not Jewish, was born in Germany and was very committed in her quest to bring the Nazis to justice.

The "Butcher of Lyons"

The Klarsfelds did succeed in apprehending Klaus Barbie, who had been the Gestapo chief of Lyons, France. Barbie had earned the nickname the "Butcher of Lyons" for the torture, murder, and deportation of Jewish children and adults—specifically, 4,342 murdered; 7,591 deported; 14,311 arrested.

While the postwar French government was sentencing him to death *in absentia,* Barbie was working in Europe for the U.S. Army as an informer, a position he held from 1947 through 1951. When pressure from the French government to arrest him became too great, Barbie and his family fled to South America. Their escape from Europe, wrote journalist Tom Bower, was "down the 'Rat Line,' an efficient, well-funded route, established with official approval by the U.S. Army's 430 CIC [agency] in Austria."

Eventually, the Klarsfelds picked up Barbie's trail. On January 25, 1983, Barbie was arrested in Bolivia on charges of dealing cocaine. The following month, he was delivered to France, where he waited four years to be tried. During that time, Serge Klarsfeld met Barbie face to face in prison. When the Nazi inquired if he were Klarsfeld, and Klarsfeld answered "yes," Barbie's response was "a long, hateful stare," wrote one reporter. It was like seeing "two actors on a vast stage, both casualties of the most monstrous crime in history."

Klaus Barbie—former chief of the Gestapo in Lyons, France—was known for his brutality, particularly toward children.

The "De-Nazification" Process

While high-ranking Nazi criminals were being rooted out and rounded up for trial, hundreds of thousands of ordinary German citizens—everyone in the Allied zones of occupation over the age of 18—were going through a process called "de-Nazification." The Allies wanted to erase from the Germans' minds all the influences of Nazism.

It was an overwhelming task. The American forces alone passed out 12 million forms containing 131 questions about a person's past life and possible ties to the Nazi Party. The questionnaires resulted in 169,282 ordinary citizens going on trial for events in their past that showed Nazi ties, however insignificant. Their answers placed them in one of five categories:

- *offender*
- *activist or military person involved in war crimes*
- *a small-time offender; someone who may have joined the Nazi Party as a youth but did not commit any crimes*
- *person who joined the Party only to keep a job, show allegiance, etc.*
- *an innocent anti-Nazi*

De-Nazification was not a great success. Many complained that only innocent people were caught—that the real criminals slipped through the cracks and escaped, or paid big money for new identities to cover up their pasts. More that 20,000 Nazis did escape, many to the Middle East or South America.

The outcome of the trial rewarded the Klarsfelds' determination and perseverance. Klaus Barbie was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment. He died in 1991.

"If I Had Done Nothing Else..."

Simon Wiesenthal, the Klarsfelds, and other lesser-known Nazi hunters, both individuals and committees, have devoted their lives to ensuring that some measure of justice is brought to Holocaust victims. In many cases, the fight has been futile—even today, the whereabouts of thousands of Nazi criminals remain unknown. Now, more than 50 years after the end of the war, most of those still missing are presumed dead.

It has been frustrating for the Nazi hunters to undertake such a complex and time-consuming mission. With every year that

passes, the likelihood of snaring another war criminal decreases greatly. In addition, once criminals are caught, there is often a lengthy process by which the person must be legally judged.

Still, despite the obstacles, most Nazi hunters feel tremendous satisfaction about what they have accomplished. After the capture and prosecution of Franz Stangl, Wiesenthal noted: "If I had done nothing else in my life but bring this wicked man to justice, I would not have lived in vain."

When the Klarsfelds were tracking Klaus Barbie in Bolivia, there was a point when they believed he might try to flee the country. Rather than lose their prey, Beate Klarsfeld admitted, they were prepared to kill him:

> *Serge and I felt responsible for the mothers of the children he had murdered. It was inconceivable to us that the mothers would one day die, having suffered terrible anguish for forty years, and Barbie would still be enjoying life. We always told the mothers that killing would be an act of despair, a defeat, but that we had to be prepared to kill him if we couldn't find a legal solution. It would still have been a success.*

For most Nazi hunters, their work goes beyond bringing criminals to trial for decades-old crimes. While seeing justice done is of primary importance, their efforts also will have an impact on the future. Said Wiesenthal:

> *My motto is, whoever was involved in operating the Holocaust has no right to die in peace. That is the part of the punishment that means something, and my job is to issue a warning to the murderers of today and of tomorrow—they must know that they will never be allowed to live in peace if they commit crimes on the scale of the Nazis. . . . If would-be Nazis of the future saw that the Nazis of today were not allowed to die in peace, even it if took 50 years to hunt them down, they might think twice about becoming Nazis.*

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"Illusions Shaped One's Hopes"

"For the dead and the living we must bear witness. . . . " This message is printed on the front of every replica identification card given to visitors at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Each card shows a picture of a Holocaust victim and gives brief details of his or her life and fate. Museum visitors each carry one of the hundreds of different ID cards as a reminder that it was individuals—ordinary people like themselves—whose lives were taken or torn apart by the Holocaust.

Bearing Witness

"Bearing witness" is an obligation that most survivors feel. They share a need to tell the world what they experienced, in the hope that the horror they endured may never be repeated. For many,

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One of the stone structures at the Valley of the Communities at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel.

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bearing witness provides a meaningful way to justify their post-war lives and ease the guilt often associated with survival. The importance of bearing witness has also been a part of the philosophy of Judaism for many centuries.

Helen Waterford, an Auschwitz survivor profiled on one of the ID cards, became a writer and lecturer:

> *My goal is to share with others the lessons I learned at such tremendous and painful cost. I know now that genocide can happen in any society where people hate those who are different. When we allow ourselves to live with hatred and seek revenge against our enemies, we destroy all hope of understanding and communicating with each other. It is up to me to plant the seeds of this message in the minds of my readers and listeners. And I hope that they will believe me. Only then will I feel certain that my survival has had some meaning.*

Hugo Gryn, who lost his family in the camps and later became a rabbi, expresses the guilt of survival this way:

> *. . . I have not got over my guilt that I am alive, and I think many of us have that problem. Rationally, I know that it is not my fault that I survived, but guilt is not always a rational thing. . . . It is a difficult thing to live with. I can't explain my guilt, but I am always conscious of it. I have tried to expiate [get rid of] it in my work, but I don't succeed.*

Questions and Faith

In addition to guilt, many survivors questioned their faith. Many Jews wanted to be proud of their heritage, but for centuries they had been the target of society's hatred. There was no doubt that, during the Holocaust, to be Jewish was to be doomed.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, when people were even questioning the existence of God, it was not surprising that they would question the very foundations of Judaism. Said Paul, a survivor from France:

I am not "ashamed to be a Jew" but I am not proud of being a Jew either. I don't think any good can come from being Jewish, it can only cause others to misunderstand and to reject my identity, that is, to reject me. . . . I find it painful to accept my Jewishness, but I accept it. And the humanism, our particular sensitivity, sense of humor, tenderness [of] the Jews are things which, in spite of everything, help us to live and they are important to me.

Those Jews who found their religious faith to be as strong or stronger in the aftermath of the Holocaust often were angry at the non-Jewish world. To some, all Gentiles came to represent the passive bystanders who failed to help. Teenage survivor Madeline Deutsch found herself engulfed by such feelings when she moved to the United States after the war. In her Philadelphia neighborhood, she said,

There was nobody that was Jewish that was my age. And at that point I could not communicate with anybody other than a Jew. I just couldn't! Everybody [else] was the enemy.

Memories Triggered

Survivors have carried with them the painful, often overwhelming, memories of the war. There are many permanent reminders, such as the tattooed identification numbers on the skin of those who had passed through or worked at certain camps. There are also more subtle reminders: perhaps the appearance of a uniformed policeman, the sounds of police sirens, the sight of passengers loading at a train station. Yehuda Bacon, an artist who lives in Jerusalem, has tried not to let the ghosts of his memories overwhelm him:

There is another trigger: seeing factory chimneys. There's a factory on the road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. It looks exactly like a crematorium, and has the same flames, the same smoke. But, you see, quite often our reaction is to laugh, and to get on with our lives. It depends how one is feeling.

An Eloquent Voice

Realizing that those who had not experienced the Holocaust did not want to hear about it, many survivors remained silent in the years following the war. Only slowly did some begin to write and speak about their pasts. One of those to speak most eloquently was Elie Wiesel, who survived both Auschwitz and Buchenwald as a teenager and wrote of his experiences in the autobiography *Night*, originally published in 1958. *Night* was followed by many novels based on Wiesel's Holocaust experiences. *Night* not only offered deep insights into the Holocaust but also encouraged other survivors to tell their stories. Slowly, scholars and historians began to focus on the Shoah (the Hebrew word meaning "Holocaust") as a subject of research and study.

Just one year after the publication of *Night*, the Holocaust was thrust vividly into the public eye by the trial of SS chief Adolf Eichmann in Israel. This international media event produced a parade of witnesses whose testimonies sparked a new wave of memories for survivors. The artist Valerie, who had shared with her family very little of her camp experiences, watched the trial on television with her 10-year-old son. By the third day, the child was tired of the proceedings, so Valerie decided to tell him her own story. She explained:

Nobel Prize–winning author and survivor Elie Wiesel has written about his experiences and shared his story with millions around the world.

He became very interested, and asked questions, and we sorted it out together. It was a heavy responsibility in a sense, because it was difficult to judge how much to burden him with. . . .

This boy, who spent two years imprisoned at Bergen-Belsen, was finally allowed to emigrate to Palestine in 1946. The prisoner number he was given is tattoed on his left arm.

Children Without Childhoods

The toll on child survivors of the Holocaust was great. Even those who were spared the brutality of the concentration camps often suffered from the loss of family in addition to terrible fear and hunger. These were children who, at young ages, were denied the security of a stable, loving home. When they emerged at war's end, it was often to learn that one or both parents had been killed.

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Coming to Terms

Survivors and their descendants have tried in many ways to come to terms with the Holocaust. Many people who were children during that period, for example, have formed support groups. One of those is the Hidden Child Foundation, based in New York. The group publishes a newsletter for the thousands of child survivors who were orphaned or uprooted by World War II. One article, entitled "Children Without Identity," tells of 300 Jewish orphans now alive in Israel who "do not know who their parents are or where they were born."

Another entry offers a network for people trying to find information on missing relatives. "My entire family was killed by the Nazis," wrote one woman. "I don't know my real first name or my date of birth. I am searching for people who knew my father . . . mother . . . and my brother. . . ."

Routes to Roots, a genealogical-research company based in Secaucus, New Jersey, also helps people to find their ancestral roots and branches—and, in some cases, living relatives. "Seventy-five percent of American Jews can trace one ancestor to Poland or what was Poland at one time," says Miriam Weiner, president of Routes to Roots. By searching dusty archives in Poland and countries that were once part of the Soviet Union, Weiner is often able to find family documents, even if the people themselves have disappeared without a trace.

Another valuable support group calls itself One By One. It is made up of descendants of people who were in the Holocaust and the Third Reich. Some are children and grandchildren of survivors and victims. Others are descended from Nazi perpetrators or Gentile bystanders. All members say they "struggle with an inheritance of denial, guilt and shame."

"As we listen to each other's stories," explain One By One members, "we learn that we are sensitive to many of the same issues. . . . One by one we seek out the humanity in each other as we listen with compassion to one another's stories of pain, guilt, anguish, loss and fear."

Yet another way of coming to terms is affirming life, or renewal. Having children of their own and rebuilding secure families has been extremely important to many survivors. Cecilie Klein-Pollack, a Czechoslovakian who was deported to Auschwitz–Birkenau in 1944, explained: "I wanted to have lots of children because each child I [have] I am bringing back from Auschwitz."

Jean, a girl born in France to a Hungarian mother and Czech father, waited for her parents long after liberation. When it became apparent that they would never return, her uncle made plans to separate Jean and her sister; he could not afford to raise both girls. "I was shattered at the idea of being separated from my sister," Jean recalled. "I was obsessed with the fear that I would never see her again, like my parents." Later, as an adult, she said:

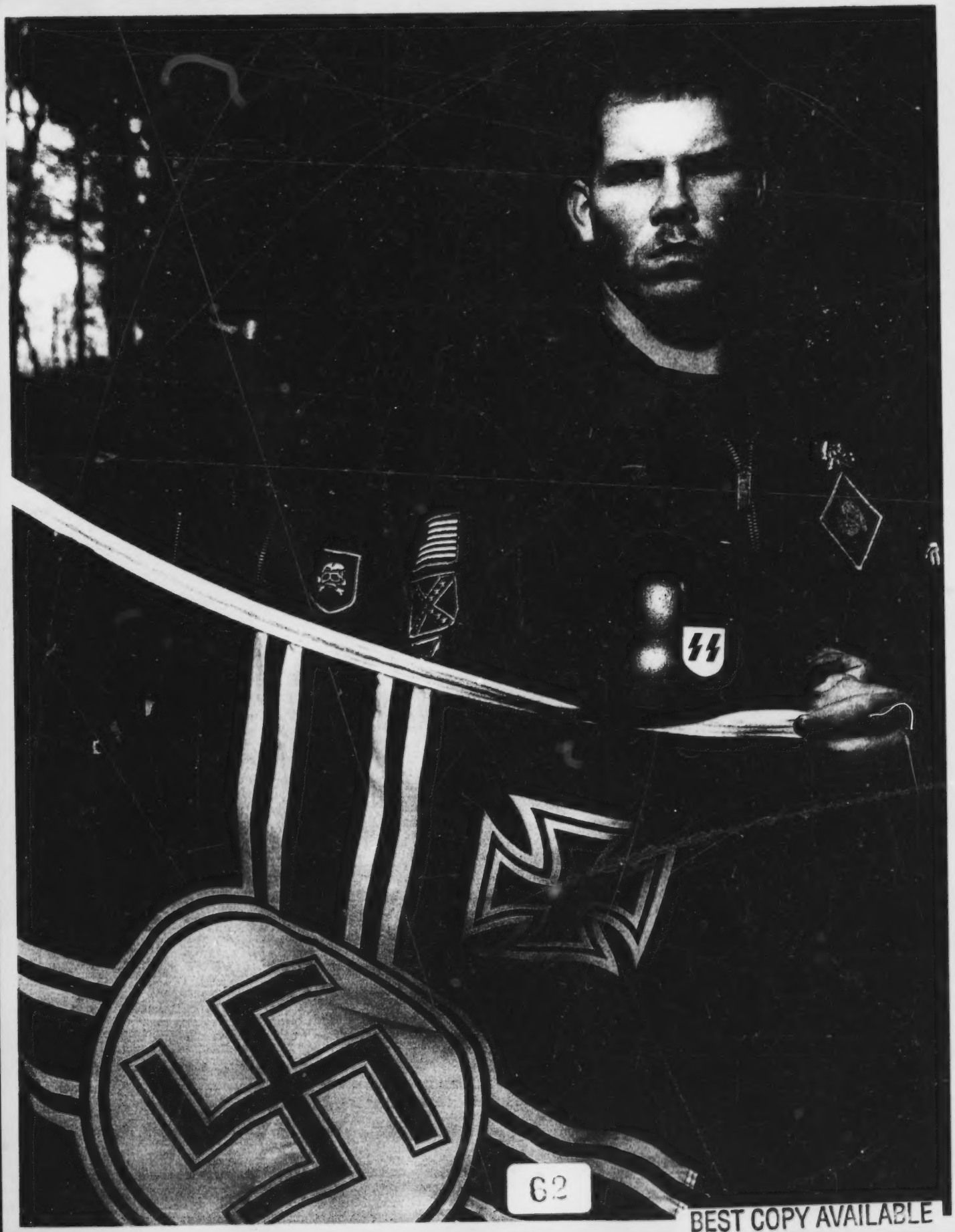
I often wonder why I don't know how to enjoy life! If I had been able to forget the past completely, perhaps I could have lived normally. . . . [But] I don't have any photos of my parents, I don't have their last letter: I don't have a grave to visit. Just one document: "Believed dead. . . Auschwitz 1943." It's hard.

"An Obligation to Future Generations"

As survivors have aged, many of them have felt an urgency to write or speak publicly, to let the world know what they witnessed and to beg people to guard against future Holocausts. Said Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, they feel "an obligation not only to the dead but also to future generations."

Still, many survivors have had trouble finding audiences. People are often reluctant to listen to stories of such horror and sadness, preferring to let the past rest. Said survivor Elie Wiesel:

After the liberation, illusions shaped one's hopes. We were convinced that a new world would be built upon the ruins of Europe. A new civilization was to see the light. No more wars, no more hate, no more intolerance, no fanaticism anywhere. And all this because the witnesses would speak. And speak they did, to no avail. This will continue for they cannot do otherwise . . . .



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"Hatred Can Be Nurtured Anywhere"

The Hitler era . . . is an indictment of all humanity, which has left me with a lasting skepticism about the innate goodness of man.
–Alfons Heck, former high-ranking member of the Hitler Youth

"The enormity of the Holocaust," wrote Alfons Heck, in *The Burden of Hitler's Legacy,* "awakened the conscience of the world, just as the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has, thus far, prevented nuclear war."

The Holocaust may have "awakened" our consciences, but not enough to prevent subsequent massacres. In recent years, large-scale murders of innocent people have occurred in Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Tibet, and many other places around the globe.

Members of a neo-Nazi party and the Ku Klux Klan gathered for a rally in New Hope, Pennsylvania, USA, in 1993.

The Nature of Genocide

The Holocaust was a genocide—the planned attempt to exterminate an entire racial, religious, political, or ethnic group—or the achievement of that extermination. The word genocide came into the English language only in the early 1950s, in the aftermath of the Holocaust. But the practice of this form of mass murder has existed throughout human history.

The Holocaust had much in common with genocides that happened before and since. Said Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal:

> *In the whole human history, whenever a crime was committed against an innocent people, there were always the same six components. . . .*
>
> • *Hatred—In all countries of the world, most people want to live in peace. It is only the extremism of their leaders that makes them hate. . . .*
>
> • *Dictatorship—Too much power in too few hands.*
>
> • *Bureaucracy—. . . People who follow orders to kill people.*
>
> • *Technology—The proper equipment for mass murder.*
>
> • *A Crisis or War—In what other time is it easiest to kill innocent people?*
>
> • *A Minority as Victim—Targets of genocide are never the mainstream, majority population.*

Killed by the Millions

Between 1915 and 1923, more than 1 million people—out of a total population of 2 million—were killed in a genocide in Armenia, then part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. According to political scientist Robert Melson, the Armenian genocide had several similarities to the Holocaust. For example:

> *In both instances, a deliberate attempt was made by a government to destroy in part or in whole an ethnoreligious community of ancient provenance [origin] that had existed as a segment of the government's own society. In both instances, genocide was*

perpetrated after the fall of an old regime and during the reign of a revolutionary movement that was motivated by an ideology of social, political, and cultural transformation. Also in both cases, genocide occurred in the midst of world wars.

In 1932–1933, a genocide occurred in Ukraine—then a part of the Soviet Union—that exceeded in numbers the Jewish death toll of the Holocaust. Yet the world knew little about it. The Soviet dictator Josef Stalin created an intentional famine by shipping much of the country's grain to Western Europe for sale, leaving the peasants in Ukraine with literally nothing to eat. He did this to impress upon the Soviet people the need for a collective system of agriculture, wherein the peasants turned over all their harvests to the government. As a result of Stalin's "organized famine," between 4.5 million and 7 million people perished. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian and Armenian genocides are just two of many.

Genocide in Our Time

In the years since the Holocaust, genocide has claimed the lives of literally millions more people. Helen Fein, editor of the book *Genocide Watch*, listed 44 postwar genocides and politicides (mass killings for political reasons), most of them in Africa and Asia. Among them:

TIBET: In 1950, the army of the People's Republic of China invaded the ancient mountain kingdom of Tibet. The Chinese Communists were determined to force the Tibetans to abandon both their Buddhist religion and their way of life. In 1959, the Tibetans rose up in a desperate fight that they had no chance of winning. Tens of thousands of Tibetans, including their spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, fled to India. Of those who remained in Tibet, more than 1 million were killed. Today, thousands continue to suffer in prisons and labor camps.

CAMBODIA: From 1975 to 1979, Communists in Cambodia who called themselves the Khmer Rouge attempted to establish

a system of collective farming. In the process, the Khmer Rouge destroyed many of the social systems and ancient traditions of the Cambodian people. At first their targets were government officials, educated middle-class citizens, and Buddhist religious leaders. But later, the killings became random and even the peasants were not safe. Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge, oversaw the genocide that resulted in the deaths of approximately 2 million Cambodians.

RWANDA: Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were murdered by Hutus in the Central African republic of Rwanda in April–July 1994. It was the worst massacre in African history. Although reports at first made it sound like a "simple" case of "ancient tribal hatred" between the Hutus and the Tutsis, it was actually a well-planned genocide.

A young Rwandan orphan sits amid the squalor of a refugee camp in Zaire, 1994.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: In 1991, with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia splintered into five separate republics—among them Bosnia-Herzegovina. The following year, the Bosnian Serb Army began committing atrocities against Bosnian Muslims. As had happened during the Holocaust, the rest of the world at first chose not to get involved. The fighting and killing in Bosnia-Herzegovina lasted four years, until international peacekeeping troops finally enforced a treaty. True peace has not followed, however, and sporadic fighting has continued.

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The Face of Hate Today

"Young people," wrote Simon Wiesenthal, "may believe that the Third Reich could never repeat itself. Least of all in their country. That is not so: hatred can be nurtured anywhere, idealism can be perverted into sadism anywhere."

Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, nativists, Silent Brotherhood, Christian Identity, Aryan Nations, racist skinheads, Christian Patriots—these are among the many hate groups worldwide that have flourished in the years since the Holocaust. Like Adolf Hitler, the members of these groups believe that they belong to a "racially pure" breed of human beings who are superior to all others and thus deserve to rule the world.

A young member of the Ku Klux Klan attends a meeting in Pulaski, Tennessee, USA.

In the 1920s and '30s, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was the strongest hate group in the United States. Catholics and Jews were their primary targets. But as more and more Klan members were accused of political corruption and bribery, the group lost favor among Americans. In the 1950s, it resurfaced, this time with blacks as its primary target of hatred. Again, the group's activities became too violent, and as people embraced the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the KKK once more lost favor.

Since then, other groups have taken the Klan's place. Klanwatch, an organization that monitors hate crimes and the

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activities of white-supremacist groups, reported that neo-Nazis and skinheads are "the most violent group of white supremacists [the United States] has seen in a quarter century."

"I Became a Culprit"

When Ingo Hasselbach decided to drop out of the neo-Nazi movement in March 1993, his departure struck the party like a bomb. He announced his decision on German national television and later told his story in the book *Führer-Ex: Memoirs of a Former Neo-Nazi.* Hasselbach's move was shocking, for he had been the founder of the neo-Nazi party in the former East Germany.

Hasselbach's "conversion" came about suddenly, during a rash of anti-immigrant bombings across Germany. One day, while listening to the radio, he heard a report that jolted him. He said:

> *. . . Three people had been burned alive in a neo-Nazi arson attack in the town of Mölln in northern Germany. Two skinheads had thrown firebombs into a middle-class Turkish home. Two young Turkish girls and their grandmother had died in the fire. Oddly enough, considering the thousands of attacks that had occurred in the last couple of years, this was the first with fatalities. One reason was that we usually threw the Molis [bombs called Molotov cocktails] against the outside walls, causing the flames to leap up and scare people without actually setting the place on fire. But these boys had thrown their Molis so they would set the house on fire and block the exits. It was an utterly cowardly and deadly act. I felt a certain boundary had been overstepped. . . . I felt sick. . . .*

As he thought about it, Hasselbach asked himself, "What guts does it take to set innocent women and girls on fire?" It was then, he admitted, that he "had an inkling, for the first time, of the real violence of the Holocaust—of what it would mean to burn people alive."

Like many neo-Nazis, Hasselbach had been brainwashed to believe that his acts of harassment and violence were justified:

> *I still saw myself as a victim. . . . I realize now that as soon as I started to work as a neo-Nazi, to incite against other people and groups, to find scapegoats, I became a culprit.*

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The same is true in Europe. Skinheads—so called because they shave their heads—first gathered in England in the 1960s. Members were typically white male teenagers or young adults from poor families. They attacked people, particularly foreigners, whom they saw as threats in the job market. Their targets became anyone whose lifestyle was different from their own. Within a few years, many had adopted Nazi beliefs and championed Adolf Hitler as their hero.

Skinhead groups operate under a variety of names, such as the Fourth Reich Skinheads. But the purpose of all these groups is the same: to harass and attack Jews, blacks, Latinos, Asians, homosexuals, and others whom they feel threatened by. In Germany, skinheads have targeted large numbers of Turkish and Lebanese foreign workers, firebombing their houses and terrorizing their families.

Membership in these hate groups is not large. Currently, there are about 8,000 to 10,000 skinheads in Great Britain; 5,000 to 10,000 in Germany; and 3,000 or so in the United States. But, while their numbers may be small and their influence on society not yet far-reaching, skinheads pose a threat to racial harmony and civil rights. An Austrian Jewish survivor of Auschwitz–Birkenau, who calls himself simply "K," takes the threat of neo-Nazis very seriously. Particularly frightening to him are the numbers of young Germans "who are still fascinated by it—seduced by it. How can they be, of all people?" "K" also worries about "revisionist historians, and those who seek to prove that the Holocaust was a hoax—that it didn't happen."

Peddlers of Denial

The Nazis kept such meticulous records that their very own documents make it impossible to deny the Holocaust. Even those Nazis on trial in Nuremberg after the war did not deny that the Holocaust took place. Although they tried to escape personal involvement, they were quick to accuse fellow party members of being guilty. In their autobiographies, some of the highest-ranking

Nazis described in detail the death camps, the slave-labor system, the gas chambers, and crematoria.

Still, a number of people worldwide—particularly young people who have no first-hand knowledge—are questioning whether the Holocaust really occurred. Those who are most radical, called the "hard deniers," claim that the millions of Jews were never killed and that the Holocaust is a "hoax." "Soft deniers" acknowledge that Jews may have died but argue that their deaths were the result of war, disease, and starvation, not of planned genocide.

Ignorance and an inadequate knowledge of history are the traits that bind revisionists (who "recast" historical facts) and deniers. Education is an important means by which there is potential to change their views and lessen their ignorance. As with all things, understanding the truth is of utmost importance.

Undeniable Proof

Reams of records in archives all over the world prove that—without a doubt—the Holocaust happened, and it happened on a huge scale. In just one repository—the World War II Records Division of the National Archives in Washington, D.C.—approximately 28,000 feet (8,500 meters) of shelves are filled with Holocaust-related material.

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, Israel, has literally millions of items in its archives; it is the most comprehensive repository of Holocaust material anywhere in the world. Within the archives are more than 30,000 taped testimonies from survivors and others whose lives were shattered by the Holocaust.

A similar interview project is being conducted by the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, created by filmmaker Steven Spielberg in 1994. The aim of the foundation, explained Spielberg, is to

> *. . . preserve history as told by the people who lived it, and lived through it. . . . It is essential that we see their faces, hear their*

voices, and understand that the horrors of the Holocaust happened to people just like us.

Spielberg observed that "racial, ethnic and cultural hatred and intolerance are not just history. They're current events."

To date, the foundation has videotaped more than 30,000 two-hour survivor interviews in 28 different languages. More than 40,000 survivors are registered with the foundation; many of them will also record their testimonies.

German Awareness Today

Since the end of World War II, the citizens and government of Germany have tried in many ways to "come to terms" with the Holocaust. In recent years, the German government made it illegal to deny that the Holocaust happened. If a German citizen is accused of denying the fact, he or she can face criminal prosecution and—if found guilty—may be fined or sent to jail.

The government has also encouraged each of Germany's states to require Holocaust study in schools at a number of levels. Although each state is independently responsible for developing its own curriculum standards, programs in most states are similar, and all cover Nazism and the Holocaust in some detail. Schools normally cover these topics during the first year of secondary school (for students from ages 14 to 16). In some schools, the topic is treated in greater depth during the following year.

Special programs and projects that enhance student awareness and education about the Holocaust are also common throughout Germany. Most teaching plans include a recommendation that every student visit a memorial site or a former death or concentration camp. Face-to-face contact with actual eyewitnesses and survivors is often incorporated as part of the on-site experience.

During the course of their Holocaust studies, students are asked to investigate the fate of the Jewish students and other persecuted groups who attended their schools, search local archives for material on Jewish culture, and research details about daily life in their communities during the 1930s and 1940s.

Remembrance at Yad Vashem

The Hebrew words *Yad Vashem,* taken from the biblical Book of Isaiah, mean "Lasting Memorial," or "A Monument and a Name." Yad Vashem—the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, Israel—was built as the monument of a nation's grief. It commemorates the greatest tragedy in Jewish history—the Holocaust, called in Hebrew *Shoah*. The memorial is, former Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban explained, "one of the most significant landmarks in the moral history of mankind."

The Yad Vashem library houses 80,000 books in 50 languages, all relating to the Holocaust. In addition, many exhibits and displays stand as memorials to the victims. Beneath the Children's Garden is a memorial to the 1½ million Jewish children who were murdered by the Nazis. The memorial was designed by world-renown architect Moshe Safdie. Visitors to that memorial enter a dark, quiet room that is hung with panels of mirrors. The glass reflects the light of only five memorial candles, but their flames are multiplied by the mirrors into 1½ million flickering lights. The only sound is a voice reading the names, ages, and countries of the children who were killed.

The Valley of the Communities is a memorial dug out among the hills surrounding Yad Vashem. Within the valley, dramatic rock structures rise many feet high. On them are engraved the names of 5,000 communities that were destroyed by the Nazis. Throughout the valley are benches and quiet spots for meditation, reflection, and remembrance of the millions of people who once lived in these communities.

In addition to remembering those who suffered and died in the Holocaust, Yad Vashem also honors the memory of non-Jews who risked their lives in order to save Jews—the "Righteous Among the Nations." Headed by an Israeli Supreme Court justice, this division hears testimonies and examines documents from Gentiles said to have helped Jews. The justice determines whether the applicants will join the approximately 13,000 men and women from all parts of Europe who have already been admitted as Righteous Gentiles.

Memorial at Yad Vashem

"To Be a Bystander Is to Share in the Guilt"

One of the founding beliefs of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., is that "to be a bystander is to share in the guilt. . . . Only the intervention of the bystander can help society to become more human." To that end, the museum provokes thought and reflection in all its visitors by presenting extensive and detailed exhibits and a vast array of archives. It is its primary goal to see that people never stand idly by while fellow human beings are persecuted.

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 3,000 tiles painted by American schoolchildren form a memorial wall for the 1½ million children who were killed during the Holocaust.

Historian Michael Berenbaum, the former director of the museum's Institute of Research, explained that the museum's displays are restricted to "genuine artifacts and documentary photographic material with proven provenance [origin or source]." The reason for this, he said, is "to preclude definitively declarations by antisemitic pseudo-scholars who try to 'prove' that the Holocaust never happened. . . ."

The educational mission of Holocaust museums and resource centers all over the world was perhaps best captured in a poem

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by 14-year-old Shoshana Wolf. As an eighth grader, Shoshana took first place in a writing contest sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In her poem, she spoke to both present and future generations:

I am the pen
that will remain to teach the world
to never forget this nightmare in history.
For if this is forgotten
this world will return to the land of nightmares.
The land where children
will die dreaming
for a tomorrow
that they will never see.

Lessons for the Future

Governments, not ordinary citizens, are the creators of war and genocide. But ordinary citizens also play a major role. It is the ordinary citizens who can prevent future genocides.

Dr. William L. Shulman, president of the Association of Holocaust Organizations, believes that, had there been fewer bystanders during the Holocaust—had more people been willing to defy the Nazis—the death toll would have been far lower. Millions of lives could have been saved. It was Adolf Hitler and his Nazi advisors who created and implemented the Final Solution. But it was the masses of German people, Gentiles in Austria, Poland, and other occupied countries, as well as unconcerned citizens around the world who never raised a voice in protest who made it possible for the genocide to be carried out.

Historian Yehuda Bauer has issued three "commandments" that he says people must observe as the lessons of the Holocaust:

Thou shalt not be a victim.
Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.
Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945

1933

January 30 Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany

February 28 Nazis declare emergency after Reichstag fire; consolidate power

March 22 Nazis open first concentration camp: Dachau

May 10 Public book burnings target works by Jews and opponents of the Nazis

July 14 Nazi Party established as one and only legal party in Germany

1934

January 26 German–Polish non-aggression pact signed

1935

September 15 Nuremberg Laws passed

1936

March Germany occupies Rhineland, flouting the Versailles Treaty

August Olympic Games held in Berlin

1937

September 7 Hitler declares end of the Versailles Treaty

1938

November 9–10 *Kristallnacht*: long-planned pogrom explodes across "Greater Germany"

September 29 Munich Conference: appeasement; Allies grant Germany Sudetenland (part of Czechoslovakia)

July 6–13 Evian Conference: refugee policies

March 13 *Anschluss*: annexation of Austria

1939

May British White Paper: Jewish emigration to Palestine limited

August 23 Soviet–German non-aggression pact signed

September 1 Germany invades Poland; Poland falls within a month

September 2 Great Britain and France declare war on Germany

September 17 Red (Soviet) Army invades eastern Poland

October 8 First ghetto established in Poland

1940

October 16 Order for creation of Warsaw ghetto

April 27 Heinrich Himmler orders creation of Auschwitz concentration camp; established May 20

Spring Germany conquers Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, and France (occupies northern part)

February 12 Deportation of Jews from Germany to occupied Poland begins

1941

June 22 Operation Barbarossa: invasion of the Soviet Union; German war on two fronts

March 24 Germany invades North Africa

July 31 Reinhard Heydrich appointed to implement "Final Solution": extermination of European Jewry

December 7 Japan attacks Pearl Harbor

December 11 Germany and Italy declare war on the United States

1942

January 20 Wannsee Conference: coordination of "Final Solution"

Spring–Summer Liquidation of Polish ghettos; deportation of Jews to extermination camps

November 19–20 Soviet Army counterattacks at Stalingrad

1943

January 18–21 Major act of resistance in Warsaw ghetto

April 19–May 16 Warsaw ghetto uprising

April 19 Bermuda Conference: fruitless discussion of rescue of Jewish victims of Nazis; liquidation of Warsaw ghetto begins

November Nuremberg Trials begin

1944

May–July Deportation of Hungarian Jews: 437,402 sent to Auschwitz

June 6 D-Day: Allies invade Normandy

July Soviet troops liberate Majdanek camp in Poland

October 2 Danes rescue more than 7,200 Jews from Nazis

June 11 Heinrich Himmler orders liquidation of all ghettos in Poland and the Soviet Union

1945

January 27 Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz–Birkenau

April–May Allies liberate Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Mauthausen, and Theresienstadt concentration camps

April 30 Hitler commits suicide

May 7 Germany surrenders unconditionally to Allies

May 8 VE Day: Victory in Europe

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Glossary

Aktion A German word meaning "action" or "plan of action." The term was often used by the SS or Gestapo to mean the planned, mass roundup, deportation, or murder of Jews.

Anti-Semite A person who hates Jews.

Antisemitism Hatred of Jews.

Aryanization A term used by the Nazis to mean the transfer of all assets and control of German-owned businesses to Germans who were considered Aryans.

Aryans Originally, a term referring to ancient Indo–Europeans or any Indo-European language. The Nazis used the term to mean people of Northern European background, or members of what the Nazis termed the German "master race."

Balfour Declaration The letter written by British foreign minister Lord Balfour to Baron Rothschild, a prominent banker, expressing support for the establishment in Palestine of a national homeland for Jewish people.

Concentration Camps Labor camps set up by the Nazis to house political prisoners or people they considered to be "undesirable." Prisoners were made to work like slaves, and many died as a result of starvation, disease, or beatings. *Also called work camps and prison camps.*

Deniers People who try to deny the fact that the Holocaust occurred.

Deportation The shipment of victims to death or concentration camps, usually by train, in cramped and unheated cattle cars.

Displaced Persons (DP) Camps Camps that were set up in Europe by the Allies after the war where refugees could obtain food, medical care, and a place to sleep, as well as receive news of loved ones.

Extermination Camps Death camps built by the Nazis in German-occupied Poland for the sole purpose of killing people. The most common method of murder used at these camps was poisonous gas. The victims' bodies were usually burned in ovens called crematoria. The six extermination camps were Auschwitz–Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibór, and Treblinka. *Also called killing centers.*

Final Solution The Nazis' term for their plan to exterminate all the Jews of Europe. The term was first used at the Wannsee Conference near Berlin on January 20, 1942.

Führer A German word meaning "leader." It was used to refer to Adolf Hitler, dictator of Germany from 1933 to 1945 and head of the Nazi Party.

Genocide The deliberate and systematic murder of an entire race, class, or large group of people.

Gentile A non-Jewish person.

Gestapo The Nazi secret police who were responsible for rounding up, arresting, and deporting victims to ghettos or camps. The Gestapo were part of the SS.

Israel The state that was established for the Jewish people in 1948, after World War II, in part of Palestine.

Holocaust A term for the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Millions of Jews and other people were murdered during that period.

Jews People who belong to the religion of Judaism.

Judenrein "Purified of Jews," a German expression for Hitler's plan to rid Germany of all Jews.

Liberation The freeing of the Nazis' victims from the death and concentration camps at the end of the war.

Liquidation The removal and murder of residents of the ghettos and the camps.

Nazi A member of the Nazi Party or something associated with the party, such as "Nazi government."

Nazi Party Short for the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Founded in 1919, the party became a potent political force under Hitler's leadership.

Nuremberg Tribunal The international court that tried Nazi war criminals in Nuremberg, Germany.

ODESSA A secret organization that was formed after the war to hide and shelter Nazis fleeing from justice.

Palestine A region in the Middle East, part of which is now the State of Israel. Palestine was controlled by the British government from 1922 to 1948.

Partisans Groups of independent fighters who lived in the woods or other remote areas and harassed the German Army or the SS in an effort to disrupt their actions.

Pogroms Organized, mass attacks on a group of people.

Propaganda The deliberate spreading of ideas, information or rumors—often false—for the purpose of helping or injuring a cause, organization, or person.

Resettlement A term used by the Nazis to make Jews believe that they were being transported to work camps in Eastern Europe, when in fact they were being taken to camps.

Resistance A general term for actions taken by individuals from various countries, both Jews and Gentiles, against the Nazis. Members of resistance groups worked "underground," in secrecy.

Righteous Gentiles Non-Jews who tried to save Jews from the Nazis, often at the risk of their own lives.

SS From the German term *Schutzstaffel,* meaning "defense unit." The SS began as Hitler's personal bodyguard and developed into the most powerful and feared organization in the Third Reich. *Also called black-shirts.*

Selection The process by which the Nazis determined which victims at the death camps would be spared to work and which ones would be killed immediately.

Shoah A Hebrew word meaning "Holocaust."

Star of David The six-pointed star that is a symbol of Judaism.

Third Reich *Reich* means "empire." In German history, the First Reich lasted from 962 until 1806, the second from 1871 to 1918. In the early 1920s, Hitler began using the term "Third Reich" to describe his own empire, which lasted from 1933 until 1945.

United Nations (UN) An international organization created at the end of World War II for the purpose of maintaining worldwide peace and security and to promote global economic and social development. The successor to the League of Nations.

The Vatican The official center of power of the Roman Catholic Church.

V-E Day Victory in Europe Day, May 8, 1945, the day on which Europe was liberated from Nazi tyranny by Allied forces.

White Paper A document issued by the British government in May 1939 that set the limits of legal Jewish immigration to the then–British-governed Palestine.

White-Supremacist Groups Groups of people such as neo-Nazis and some skinheads whose purpose is to harass and attack Jews, blacks, and others whom they feel threatened by.

Zionism The movement to create a Jewish national state that arose in the late nineteenth century in response to rising antisemitism.

Zionists Supporters and followers of Zionism.

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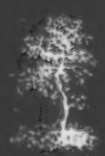

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